

# SEND IT!?!

What to Do

— and What Not to Do —

When an Editor or Agent  
Wants Your Manuscript



**Chris Mandeville**

You Got a “Send It”

Congratulations!







# This Class Covers:

- What to send
- Common mistakes
- Tips for polishing and proofing your submission

[Checklist](#) to review before hitting “send”

# What to Send

## The Submission Package:

- The Letter
- The Synopsis
- The Pages

# Examples



Michelle Johnson

Inklings Literary  
Agency



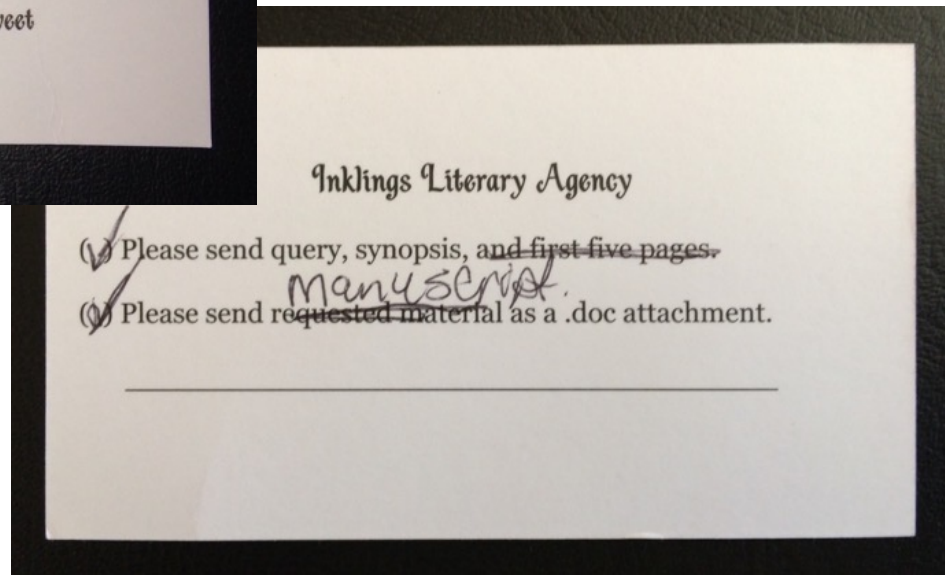
Kristin Nelson

Nelson Literary  
Agency

# How Do You Know What to Send?



# Example



# Example

Dear Chris Mandeville:

We would like to see the first 30 pages or so of SEEDS.

We are an environmentally-friendly, paperless office. To submit, please upload your sample pages to our electronic submission database. It's quick, easy, and saves you the postage.

Simply click on (or cut and paste this link into your internet browser):

<http://www.nelsonagency.com/cgi-bin/login.php>

Then enter this password when prompted: a19m80 (Password is changed regularly. If you decide not to submit within a few weeks, you'll need to contact us at [query@nelsonagency.com](mailto:query@nelsonagency.com) for the new password.)

Follow the directions on the submissions page.

Please include your original one-page query letter as the first page of your 30-35 pages. No synopsis necessary—we hate knowing too much about the plot!

Also, please remember that it can take up to two months for us to review manuscript pages although we try to be more prompt. We will respond by email.

We look forward to reading your submission.

Sincerely,  
Kristin Nelson

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Dear Chris Mandeville:

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# How Do You Know What to Send?

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## Michelle Johnson – Inklings Website

We accept **electronic submissions only**. Do not call the agency to query, or to inquire about querying. Do not use the postal service to mail your submissions.

**To query**, type “Query (Agent Name)” plus the title of your novel in the subject line, then please send the following pasted into the body of the e-mail to query(at)inklingsliterary(dot)com:

A query letter that includes:

- The title, genre, and word count of your project.
- A brief blurb about the story.
- A brief bio including any publishing credits.
- The first 10 pages of your manuscript
- A brief synopsis (1-2 pages)

Your subject line should look like this (If you were querying Michelle and the name of your book is "One Thousand Ways to Drink Coffee"):  
Query Michelle: ONE THOUSAND WAYS TO DRINK COFFEE.

We will not open unsolicited attachments, so make sure you send all of the above pasted into the body of the email.

Our response time varies for queries, but we do answer all queries that come in while we are open to submissions.

A query letter that includes:

- The title, genre, and word count of your project
- A brief blurb about the story
- A brief bio including any publishing credits



DECEMBER 14, 2022

## 5 Tips for Setting Achievable Writing Goals

by Angie Hodapp

Many of you are probably familiar with Masterclass, the subscription-based website where luminaries from a wide array of specialties—typically business, lifestyle, and the arts—offer in-depth, high-production-value courses you can take from the comfort of your home. Writing instructors on the platform include, among many others, Margaret Atwood, RL Stine, James... [MORE>](#)

1 Comment

Categories: Uncategorized



DECEMBER 14, 2022

## End-of-Year Stats & Maybe End of an Era

by Kristin Nelson

Happy December! Wishing all our loyal newsletter readers a joyful holiday season. As extra holiday cheer, we are delivering our end-of-year stats early. Normally we make readers wait until January, so click now and enjoy. We've also been crunching some newsletter data, and those insights show that 2023 will ring... [MORE>](#)

34 Comments

Categories: #ReadWithJenna, agenting, Agents/Agenting, bestseller lists, books to film, client books, end of the year, film, foreign rights, holidays, Hollywood, Hollywood - Film/TV, new clients, New York Times, NLA Authors, offering representation, passing on sample pages, queries, requesting material, research, statistics, submission, The Today Show



DECEMBER 14, 2022

## 7 Tips for Writing Powerful Endings

by Angie Hodapp

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# The Letter

## Query Letter

- The Hook
- The Book
- The Cook

## Cover Letter

- **Reminder**
- The Hook
- The Book
- The Cook

# Sample – The Letter

Dear Michelle,

I enjoyed meeting you at the Pikes Peak Writers Conference. Thank you for requesting my post-apocalyptic adventure, SEEDS, which is complete at 130,000 words.

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**PITCH PARAGRAPH**

# Pro Advice – Pitch Paragraph

- You don't have to summarize the whole novel in your pitch paragraph – that's pretty much impossible.
- The pitch paragraph should read like the back cover copy you would see on an already published novel.

Kristin Nelson  
Nelson Literary Agency

# Pitch Paragraph

- tells what your project is about
- written in third person, present tense
- similar to the copy you see on the back of a book

# Sample – The Letter

Dear Michelle,

I enjoyed meeting you at the Pikes Peak Writers Conference. Thank you for requesting my post-apocalyptic adventure, SEEDS, which is complete at 130,000 words.

Fifty years after a catastrophic solar event destroys all life and technology on the planet's surface, nineteen-year-old Reid Landers lives in the old NORAD facility deep inside Cheyenne Mountain with other descendants of Originals, barely subsisting on canned food and rats. For all they know they are the last hundred souls on Earth...until Reid meets the first stranger he has ever seen, a stranger with a grown apple. This catapults him on a journey to California to find seeds for his people, an adventure fraught with skin-carving pirates, twisted missionaries, and mercenaries on Rollerblades. Even if Reid can outwit the despot leader of "Lost" Angeles and resist the siren's song of a beautiful con artist, there may not be any seeds left to find. And his people—including the woman he secretly loves—might not take him back.

## **BIO PARAGRAPH**

Attached is the full manuscript and a synopsis as .doc documents as you requested. I look forward to hearing from you at your convenience.

Kind regards,  
Chris

Chris Mandeville  
Author, speaker, instructor  
c.mandeville@icloud.com

# Bio Paragraph

My short fiction appears in *Undercurrents: an Anthology of What Lies Beneath*, and I write a regular column “Tools for Writers” for Kobo Writing Life.

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Chris Mandeville  
Author, speaker, instructor  
c.mandeville@icloud.com

# Top Mistakes – Letter

- Wrong/misspelled name
- Too long (more than 1 page)
- Too many genres/outdated genre
- Too personal/casual
- Excuses/apologies
- Groveling
- Complimenting self or writing
- Comparisons to films rather than books
- Comparisons to books that set expectations too high
- Including copyright
- Including art
- Including more than one project
- Typos/misspellings



## The Submission Package:

- The Letter
- The Synopsis
- The Pages

# What is a Synopsis?

“Simply put, a synopsis is a way of relating your story in a logical, chronological manner that hits the high points of plot and character development and resolution.”

Pam McCutcheon in *Writing the Fiction Synopsis*

Inklings Literary Agency

- Please send query, synopsis, and ~~first five pages.~~
  - Please send ~~requested material~~ *manuscript.* as a .doc attachment.
- 

A synopsis can be 1 to 20+ pages

Commonly “short” = 1-2 pages

# Pro Advice – Synopsis

“Sometimes you need to write a long summary in order to write a short one. You needn’t, however, show your work.”

“Your synopsis shouldn’t exceed 1,000 words, regardless of the length of your book.”

Evan Gregory, The Ethan Ellenberg Literary Agency



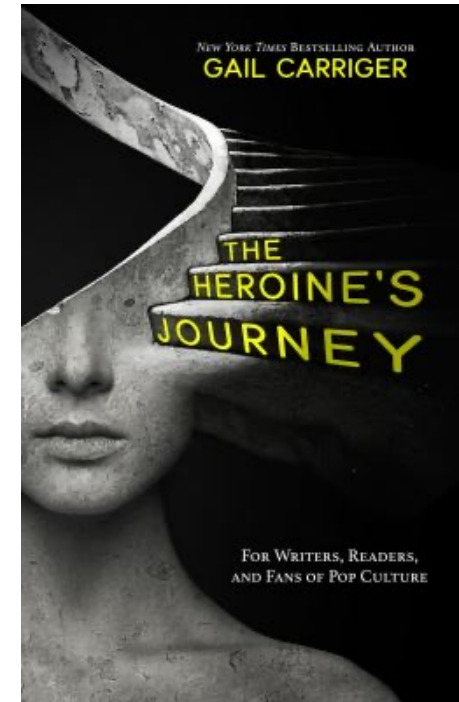
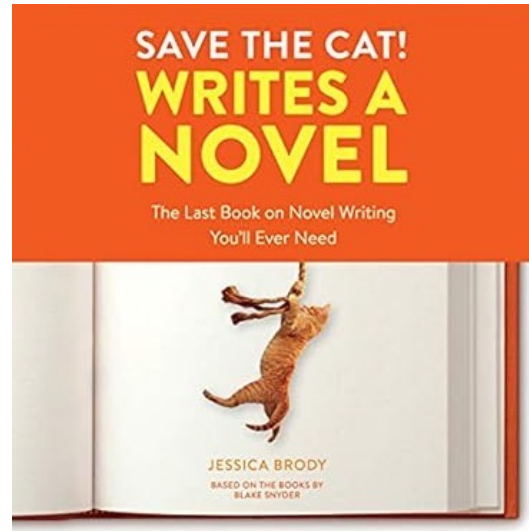
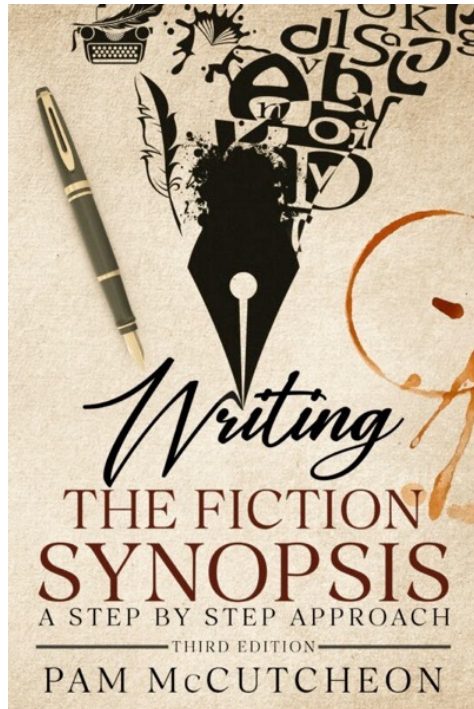
# Pro Advice – Synopsis

“To simplify writing a synopsis, pick a structure, such as the Hero's Journey, or one better suited to your story, and walk through the 7 or 10 or 12 beats of that structure.

“Use that as the basis for your synopsis. Then layer in appropriate voice and you are on your way.”

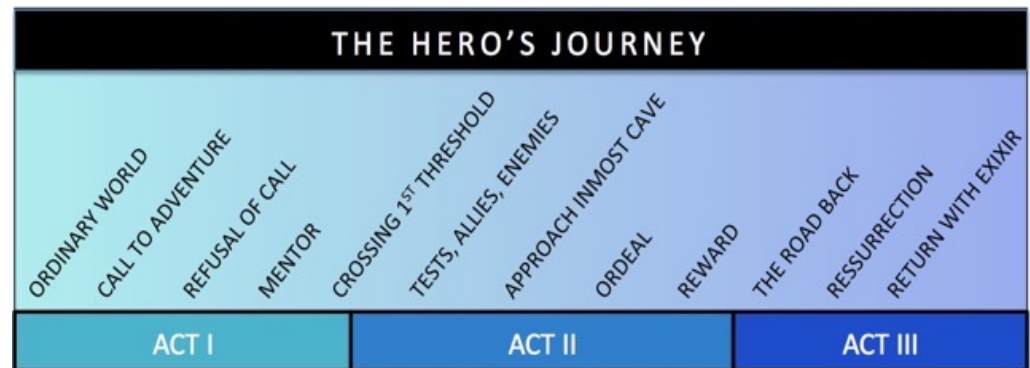
Deb Courtney, Courtney Literary

# Use a Guide



[JonathanMaberry.com/  
freestuffforwriters.cfm](http://JonathanMaberry.com/freestuffforwriters.cfm)

[JaneFriedman.com/  
how-to-write-a-novel-synopsis](http://JaneFriedman.com/how-to-write-a-novel-synopsis)



# Guidelines – Synopsis

- No personal info
- Third person, present tense
- Use the voice of the project
- Single-spaced for one page; double-spaced for longer
- Include genre indicators
- Include the ending
- Only include details about characterization and subplots insofar as they relate to the resolution of the main plot
- Tell the truth, but not the whole truth



## The Submission Package:

- The Letter
- The Synopsis
- The Pages

# First Page

1. Hook
2. Voice
3. Genre indicators
4. Character
5. Action
6. Conflict
7. Setting: just enough to ground the reader
8. Something for the reader to care or worry about
9. Why would a reader turn the page?
10. Great first and last lines

# Top Mistakes – Opening Pages

- Starting in wrong place
- Starting in clichéd place  
(car crash, phone call, waking up, going on a journey/trip)
- Using a mirror to show character's looks
- Focusing too much on backstory or setting
- Info-dumps
- Redundancy
- Too slow/meandering/expository
- Heavy dialogue
- Heavy jargon

# Guidelines – Editing

## ➤ Reduce:

- Crutch words/phrases (like “just”)
- Empty adverbs
- Consecutive adjectives
- “To Be” verbs
- Passive voice
- Repetition

## ➤ Eliminate:

- Character saying/thinking something s/he already knows for the benefit of the reader
- Dialogue that’s too perfect or has too much dialect
- Similar character names
- Exclamation points

## ➤ Improve:

Consistency • Flow • Pace • Wordsmithing

# Guidelines – Proofreading

- Typos
- Spelling
- Grammar
- Its/It's (and other common contractions and homophones)
- Subject-verb agreement
- Dangling modifiers
- Punctuation
- Proper name consistency
- Font consistency
- Formatting

# Standard Manuscript Format

- Black ink on white
- One-inch margins
- Ragged right margin (i.e. do not "fill justify")
- 12 pt Times New Roman or equivalent font
- Double-space
- Center chapter headings
- Place chapter headings approximately 1/3 down the page
- First page = 16 lines of text; subsequent pages = 24 lines
- Indent each paragraph 1/2 inch
- Slugline on top left of header: LastName/manuscript title
- Page number on top right of header



## The Submission Package:

- The Letter
- The Synopsis
- The Pages
- **Extras**

# Pro Advice – Fresh Eyes



# Pro Advice – Editing

When you're done editing:

Accept or Reject All Changes

turn off Track Changes

# Be Professional

- Email address
- Signature line
- Social media
- Blog comments
- Online comments
- No flaming or trolling

## The Submission Package:

- The Letter ✓
- The Synopsis ✓
- The Pages ✓
- Extras ✓

# EMERGENCY!

Something happens and you can't send your submission—  
What should you do?



# Pro Advice – Etiquette

- Do not email explanations or excuses
- Do not try to “buy more time” before sending your submission
- Do not email at all!
- Do not call under any circumstances

# PROBLEM SOLVED!

Now you're ready to send your submission!  
But it's been a month, or many months, since the request...

What should you do?



# Pro Advice – Etiquette

**“Don't self reject.**

“If the agent requested it, then send it, even if years have passed.

“What's the worst that can happen? The agent says, ‘Sorry, no longer interested.’

“Best practice, though, is to strike while the iron is hot. The request happened because the agent likes something about the project. But the market (what editors are asking agents to look for) changes fast.

“So if you send requested materials after lots of time has passed, don't be surprised if you get a no. However, a yes isn't outside the realm of possibility, so ring that doorbell.”

Angie Hodapp  
Nelson Literary Agency

# Pro Advice – Etiquette

**SEND IT!**

## The Submission Package:

- The Letter ✓
- The Synopsis ✓
- The Pages ✓
- Extras ✓

# How to Send

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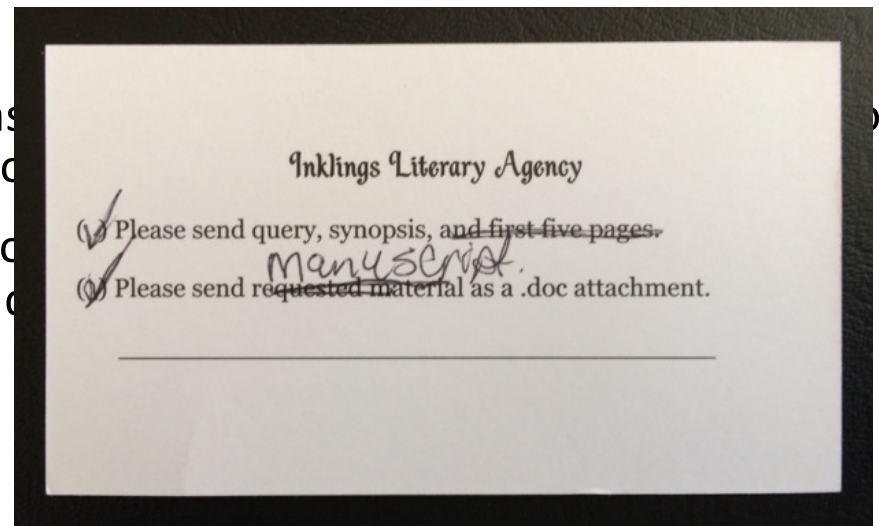
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Sincerely,  
Kristin Nelson



# How to Send

- Email:
  - Special subject line
  - Cover/Query letter in body of email
  - Type of attachment
- Snail Mail:
  - Follow instructions
  - You may need to send an SASE if you want the ms back
  - Do not make a signature required on receipt
- Other:
  - Online portals like Submittable & QueryTracker

# Top Mistakes

- Failure to follow guidelines
- Not including attachments
- Inconsistent voice between ms pages, synopsis, and pitch paragraph
- Not using Standard Manuscript Format

# #1 Mistake

*Not following guidelines*



## The Submission Package:

- ➔ The Letter
- ➔ The Synopsis
- ➔ The Pages



# When Will I Hear Back?

“Because of COVID, more people started writing books and more people are sending queries to agents (thousands per month!). Where agents used to have a turnaround time of a few weeks, now it can be up to six months.”

**Brandy Vallance**  
Barbara Bova Literary Agency

# Etiquette

- Do not call under any circumstances
- Do not pester
- Do not post comments anywhere
- After a certain amount of time you can send a follow up email

# When Can I Follow Up?

## **How often to follow up on partial and full manuscript requests:**

An agent will **expect** you to follow up at some point if they haven't gotten back to you in a timely fashion.

→ An individual agent's specific guidelines trump everything else

## **So how long do you wait?**

I'd recommend sending ... an extremely polite check-in every two months (or so) until you get tired of following up.

→ Reply to your last correspondence to the agent without changing the subject line.

Nathan Bransford

former literary agent with Curtis Brown Ltd  
on [NathanBransford.com](http://NathanBransford.com)



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- Common mistakes
- Tips for polishing and proofing your submission

For the **checklist** to review before hitting “send,” visit [www.ChrisMandeville.com](http://www.ChrisMandeville.com) under the section “For Writers”

