A Beginner's Guide to Publishing
Aubrey Hirsch

Cover Letter Format

Your Name
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
City, State Zip
(412) 555-1234
emailaddress@email.com

Today's Date, Year

Name of Editor or "[Genre] Editor"
Name of Journal
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
City, State Zip

Dear Name of Editor or "[Genre] Editor":

Please find enclosed (or attached) "Name of Story/Name of Each Poem/Name of Essay in Quotation Marks," a #,000 word story/essay, for your consideration. My work has appeared in *Name of Journal in Italics*.

I always enjoy reading your magazine and especially appreciated last month's "Name of Story/Essay/Poem From the Magazine" by Author's Name. It was exactly the kind of adjective and adjective work I've come to expect from your pages.

Your listing in *Website Where You Found Their Listing* said you are seeking work with "description that fits your piece, or another reason you chose this magazine," and I think my story/essay/poetry fits this description.

Note a simultaneous submission here.

Close with your bio (always written in the third person) if they ask for it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

{Sign your name here after printing.}

Your Name

Prose Manuscript Format

Your Name   Approx. #,#00 words
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
City, State Zip
(412) 555-1234
emailaddress@email.com

Title of Story/Essay

by

Your Name

Notice that the title of your story/essay appears halfway down the first page. The top of

the page is left blank so that editors have space to write notes about your piece. In the upper left

hand corner of the first page, type your name, address, phone number, and email address. You

are re-typing this information on the manuscript itself because the editors will most likely lose

your cover letter. In the upper right hand corner of the first page, give an approximate word

count. An exact word count isn't necessary. Round to the nearest hundred. Process your story in a

normal font, like Times or Times New Roman. The type must be readable—use an 11 or 12

point font with serifs. Make sure it is DOUBLE SPACED, never single spaced or one and a half

spaced. Print on only one side of the page. Editors do not like manuscripts that are difficult to

read or comment on. Notice that there is no page number on the first page. On every subsequent

page, your header should include your last name, a keyword from the title of your piece and the page number. This way, if the papers on the editor's desk fly all over the place, they are easy to separate and put back in order. If you don't know how to make a different header on the first page—LEARN. If your story/essay needs section breaks or white space, denote them in the manuscript with this symbol:

#

This is important because sometimes a section break will line up with a page break and make it difficult to tell when sections end. Make sure that when you decide to send something to a magazine or journal, you are sending your CLEANEST copy. Unlike professors or people in your workshops, editors will stop reading if they see grammar or proofreading mistakes. They will assume that you either don't know the rules, or don't care enough about your piece to re-read it. Most submissions are accepted electronically, but if you're asked to submit through the post, send your manuscript an envelope that is big enough that you don't have to fold your it. Attach your cover letter and SASE (Self Addressed Stamped Envelope) to it with a large paperclip. This should be a regular white business sized envelope. It should be addressed to you, with no return address, and should have sufficient postage to make its way back to you. If your manuscript is declined, the publication will send you a rejection slip in your SASE. If it is accepted, they will send you a contract. Don't be discouraged by rejection slips. Every writer has them, stacks of them. Signal the end of your story/essay with three hash marks or the word END so editors know they aren't missing a page.

# # #

Poetry Manuscript Format

Your Name
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
City, State Zip
(412) 555-1234
emailaddress@email.com

Title of Poem

Poetry is formatted a bit differently. Put
your contact information on each poem.
Single space your poetry, typing it
exactly as you'd like it to appear.
Use a font that is readable, but not so big that
Word is breaking your lines for you.
Use a one inch margin for your contact information
and a two inch margin (left and right)

for the poem itself.
Markets usually want between three and five poems
per submission. Put each poem on a separate
page no matter how short they are.
Hold your poems and cover letter together
with a paperclip. If the total is five pages or less
you can choose to use a small white envelope
and tri-fold the contents. If it is more than five pages,

use a large brown envelope. Always include
a SASE for the journal's response.

Novel Query Letter Format

Your Name
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
City, State Zip
(412) 555-1234
emailaddress@email.com

Today's Date, Year

Name of Editor or (more likely) Agent
Name of Press or Agency
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
City, State Zip

Dear Name of Editor or Agent:

Paragraph one is your hook. Distill your book (which you should absolutely, 100% have completed **before** you query) down to one attention-grabbing sentence. For example, here's a "hook" for *The Da Vinci Code*: "A murder in the silent after-hour halls of the Louvre museum reveals a sinister plot to uncover a secret that has been protected by a clandestine society since the days of Christ." Catchy, no?

In paragraph two, you give a short synopsis of your plot. The emphasis here is on **plot**. The structure, point of view and main character are important, but you really want to focus on plot here. What kind of big decision is the character put to as the impetus for this book? What's at stake for them in this decision? You want to entice the agent (or editor) to ask for more pages, so don't give away the ending. Just set up the central plot points: Who are the main characters? What are their problems or conflicts? How are their lives affected by these events? If you want to see some samples, check out AgentQuery.com. QueryShark.blogspot.com is also a great resource, and she does query critiques!

The last paragraph is where you take care of business and write a little bit about yourself. Tell them the book is finished and ready for review. Give them the working title and the word count. Then, include a short bio. If you have an MFA, mention it. If you have previous publications, definitely mention those; this shows that you've already spent some time building an audience for your book. If you don't have any of those, no big deal, you just have more room for your synopsis! Your day job is only worth mentioning if it's relevant to the story (like, if you're an EMT and so is your protagonist), otherwise, leave it out.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

{Sign your name here after printing.}

Your Name

Some Notes on Electronic Submissions

- For electronic submissions, **you don't need to format your cover letter like a business letter**, so you can leave off the magazine's contact information and your own. Just start with "Dear Editor."
- In fact, most journals that take electronic submissions do so through Submittable or the old CLMP submissions manager. This is easy because you just fill in the blanks! Paste your cover letter and bio into the appropriate field.

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                                    * = required field
                    * first name: [                          ]
                     * last name: [                          ]
                        * email:  [                          ]
                      company:    [                          ]
                    * address 1:  [                          ]
                      address 2:  [                          ]
                        * city:   [                          ]
                        * state:  [                        ▼] (required if U.S. address)
                         * zip:   [                          ] (required if U.S. address)
                     * country:   [ USA                    ▼]
                        phone:    [                          ]
                    * password:   [                          ] (8-12 characters)
               * confirm password:[                          ]
                   mailing list:  ☑
                   writer name:   [                          ] (if different from above)
             * submission title:  [                          ]
                         * file:  ( Choose File ) No file chosen (500.00 KB max)
                     comments:    [                          ]
                                  [                          ]
                                  [                          ] (3000 characters max)

                              [    submit    ]
```

- **Send your manuscript in their preferred format** (.rtf, .doc, .docx). If they don't specify, go with .rtf or .doc. Pay attention to this! It is an easy thing to get right and if you get it wrong, they won't even open it.
- **Make sure your file name looks professional.** I always go with "MyLastName_KeywordFromTitle.rtf." Don't send a file named "story.doc" or "draft5.docx" or "pomez4classs.txt." Be professional!
- Likewise, **your email address should reflect your professional writer-self**. If you need to, create a separate email address to use when submitting. It's better for editors to know you as yourfirstname.yourlastname@gmail.com than ermahgerd87@hotmail.com.
- Some magazines charge a small fee for electronic submissions. If the fee is about equivalent to the cost of printing and postage ($2-$3), I don't even blink at it. But, personally, I raise an eyebrow to any submissions fee over $5. (This is only for regular submissions; contests are a different animal.)

Finding Markets for Your Work

Until you've learned your way around the literary marketplace, looking for venues that are appropriate for your work can be intimidating. Here are some ideas for places to look to get you started:

- You can buy (or borrow) a copy of **The Writer's Market** or buy a subscription to **Duotrope.com**. These are both fairly exhaustive lists of literary journals, the latter being a searchable, online database that also has a submissions tracker. **The Review Review** also has a searchable list of lit mags and it's free (http://www.thereviewreview.net/magazines)!
- Check out **Entropy Magazine's** bi-monthly list of "Where to Submit."
- Sign up for the **Creative Writing Opportunities listserv**. They will automatically send you emails about calls for submissions, theme issues, contests, writer's colonies and more. You will get 8,000,000 (actually closer to 10-15) emails a day from them, but it will be worth it! Sign up here: https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/CRWROPPS-B/info
- There are several websites that host literary journal rankings (BookFox, Perpetual Folly). The most exhaustive of these is **therankings.wordpress.com**. These rankings are based on mentions in various anthologies. This would be a good place to look for ambitious markets. Sites like **The Review Review** and **New Pages** can offer you some insight through their lit mag reviews.
- You can also investigate these **year-end anthologies** on your own. I recommend the Pushcart Prize anthology and the Best American Series. This way you can get a sense of which journals are winning prizes and what kind of work they publish. Don't forget to check out the special mentions or notables in the backs of the books!
- You can learn about new markets by **stalking your favorite writers' bios** (the acknowledgements sections in short story collections are another good place to look). This is a great way to find editors whose tastes overlap with yours.
- **Use social media.** Have Twitter and Facebook accounts that reflect your status as an emerging writer (even if you only use them to look and not to share). Follow writers you admire, journals that interest you and their editors. Pay attention to what journals they link to and watch out for calls for submissions and complaints about what editors see too much (or too little!) of.

Of course there's no substitute for immersing yourself in the world of small presses. Subscribe to some journals, give subscriptions as gifts, order books from independent presses. Talk about what you're reading and where you're submitting. Join the community and enhance it with your voice and your support! The best way to learn your way around is to dive in!

Sample Submissions Guidelines

SUBMIT TO *THIRD COAST*

- Our current reading period opens September 15, 2012 and closes March 31, 2013.
- Please create a submission only after reading the submission guidelines found below.
- *Third Coast* accepts submissions **exclusively** via our online Submission Manager, which can be found at:

  http://www.thirdcoastmagazine.com/submissions.

- Paper submissions will be returned unread. Submissions sent via e-mail attachment will be deleted.

Third Coast publishes poetry, fiction (including traditional and experimental fiction, shorts, and novel excerpts, but not genre fiction), creative nonfiction (including reportage, essay, and memoir), drama (including both performed and unperformed pieces) and translations. We encourage new as well as established writers. Payment is two contributor's copies and a one-year subscription. All rights revert to the author upon publication.

We recommend you look at a recent issue before submitting. You may order single issues (the current issue is $9; a back issue is $6) by sending a check made out to Third Coast, English Department, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008. Write "Sample Current Issue" or "Sample Back Issue" on the envelope. We have also posted a few selections from our current and back issues on our website.

Once you have submitted work, please wait until you have heard back from us before submitting another manuscript. We do accept simultaneous submissions, but we ask that you withdraw the submission by way of our online Submission Manager if your piece is accepted elsewhere.

Submission Guidelines:

- **All** submissions should be sent via the online Submission Manager. All attachments sent to our e-mail address will be deleted, and any submissions sent via regular mail will not be read.
- For all submissions, we accept simultaneous submissions, but not multiple submissions. Please submit no more than one manuscript at a time. Also, we do not accept previously published works.
- **Fiction:**
  o Submit manuscripts of up to 7,500 words (or up to 25 pages); authors wishing to submit longer manuscripts should query the editors at editors@thirdcoastmagazine.com.
  o For short shorts, we accept up to five at a time (please submit short shorts in **one** electronic document).
  o Under the current Fiction editors, the average length for accepted publications is 12-18 pages.
  o Fiction submissions should be typed, double-spaced, openly margined, and printed clearly.

- o The author's name, address, email address, and phone number should be included on the first page. Each subsequent page should have a page number and the author's name or title of the piece.
- **Nonfiction:**
  - o Submit manuscripts of up to 6,000 words.
  - o The current Nonfiction editor encourages the submission of lyric essays, braided essays, and short essays in the range of 700 – 2,000 words.
  - o Nonfiction submissions should be typed, double-spaced, openly margined, and printed clearly.
  - o The author's name, address, email address, and phone number should be included on the first page. Each subsequent page should have a page number and the author's name or title of the piece.
- **Poetry:**
  - o Poetry should be typed and single-spaced, with the author's name and contact info on the first page.
  - o Stanza breaks should be double-spaced.
  - o Please send no more than five poems at a time (with a maximum of fifteen pages total per submission).
  - o Please submit all poems in **one** electronic document.
- Before submitting your work, please save it as a DOC or RTF file (most word processing programs, including Microsoft Word, allow you to save files in the .rtf format). If you are using a Mac, add the extension ".rtf". *Third Coast* cannot currently process submissions in the DOCX format; submissions in this format will not be read.
- Please remember to include the title of the work, your name, and contact info on the first page of your manuscript.
- We do not accept submissions from April 1st through September 14th. Submissions received during the closed period will be deleted.
- Submissions are typically accepted or declined within four months. However, due to the number of submissions received, response times may be longer.
  - o Please do **not** inquire about the status of your submission until at least **five (5)** months have passed.
  - o When inquiring about the status of a submission, please write "Submission Inquiry—Fiction," "Submission Inquiry—Poetry," "Submission Inquiry—Creative Nonfiction," or "Submission Inquiry—Drama" in the Subject line of your e-mail. E-mails should be sent to editors@thirdcoastmagazine.com.

We thank you for your interest in *Third Coast*, and we look forward to reading your work!

Sample Submissions Tracking Spreadsheet

Story Name	Market	Date Sent	Response Received	Notes
Story 1	Tin House	12/10/15	Form rejection 3/6/15	
	Crazyhorse	3/10/16		
	Hobart	10/5/16		
	Kenyon Review	10/8/16	Nice rejection 12/05/16	Thought the ending was too slow. Send something else!
Story 2	PANK	7/16/16	Acceptance!! 8/12/16	STORY PUBLISHED AT PANK
	Bluestem	7/16/16	Withdrawn 8/12/16	Send something else!
Story 3	Paris Review	4/3/16		
	Gettysburg Review	4/3/16		
	Hot Metal Bridge	4/3/16	Form rejection 5/17/16	