

The Query Letter and Pitch

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Before you submit:

- Be honest with yourself about the state of your manuscript.
- Check pagination, formatting, and spelling.
- Do your research: Is this publisher a good fit? Check their backlists/catalogues.

What is a query letter?

- A query/pitch letter introduces the manuscript and writer to a publisher in a concise, professional manner, with the aim of selling the manuscript (in present or altered form) to a prospective editor.
- It should include the following:
 - **Who you are:** a brief bio and contact information
 - **What you've written:** a brief novel synopsis or overview of nonfiction subject, according to publishing house guidelines
 - **Why she should be interested:** a basic outline of/market for your manuscript

A query letter should be

- **concise and convincing**
 - Get to the point quickly! (Think of the letter as a hook or elevator pitch.)
 - Introduce what you've written, its length, and who will read it.
 - Offer the strengths of your manuscript. (Why do people need to read this?)
 - Describe what the market is like for books like yours. (Are there similar books? How is yours different?)
 - Why should the publisher invest in *you*? What is your author profile?
- **simple and professional**
 - Use plain English.
 - Offer helpful comparisons to titles in the publisher's catalogue.
 - Remember, you're asking for an investment: this is a business proposition.

Query Letter DOs:

- DO follow publishing house guidelines.
- DO verify whether or not simultaneous submissions are accepted
- DO be appreciative
- DO be your own agent: keep creative distance; sell your work like it's someone else's; and include any positive feedback it has received from industry professionals.

Query letter DON'Ts:

- DON'T be purposefully vague. Get to the point.
- DON'T send multiple submissions to the same publisher at the same time.
- DON'T give publishers deadlines.

Additional Resources

- Query Shark: www.queryshark.blogspot.ca
- Miss Snark (no longer updated but great archives): www.missnark.blogspot.ca/search/label/query%20letters
- Author Susan Swan's advice on query-letter writing: <http://susanswanonline.com/wpress/how-to-write-a-cover-letter-to-an-agent-or-a-publisher/>