

HOW TO WRITE A QUERY LETTER**HOW TO WRITE A QUERY LETTER: Your Sales Pitch to Hook a Literary Agent**

What is a query letter? An intriguing, well-written one-page letter describing your book. At the top left, write the title of your manuscript, the genre and page or word. Include a brief summary, if this is requested on the agent's website under submission guidelines.

Why do you need one? Today, many book publishers will not consider unagented submissions (unsolicited manuscripts); this may be returned to the writer (if an SASE with correct postage is included), or end up in the recycle bin. There are rare exceptions, of course – your best friend works for a book publisher, and you send your manuscript directly to them without an agent and query letter. A book publisher may directly approach a well-known celebrity, business owner, or person and suggest a book project. In all cases, you will need a literary agent to protect your business interests, from manuscript to printed book, to sales, promotion and for feedback on your marketing

platform. A good agent is your career advisor, contracts negotiator, and the best editorial source to help you sell your book.

This is a sales pitch. Study query letters online at *Writer's Digest*, *Poets & Writers*, and the *Writer Magazine*. Ask for feedback from your writer friends before you send your letter that will, hopefully, get you a literary agent.

You may query several agents simultaneously. Some agents, however, request a single submission query. Each agent has specific submission guidelines, stated on the website; follow these guidelines. If sending electronically, do not include attachments unless specifically directed to do so. If sending by snail mail, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) with sufficient for the return of your materials. If an agent is interested, she or he will request additional information: a book proposal; a book summary; sample pages or chapters; or the complete manuscript.

The query letter:

- PARAGRAPH #1 The first sentence of your book, plus a brief (very brief) summary.
- PARAGRAPH #2 Why you are qualified to write this book (brief bio).
- PARAGRAPH #3 Why your book is unique and/or its place in today's market.
- PARAGRAPH #4 List of your publishing accomplishments (if any), and your social Media followers (numbers).

At the end of the letter, thank the agent for her or his time. If you have met this agent at a conference or at an event, mention that here. After you sign your name, add your contact information: name, email, phone number, mailing address.

Response Time:

Each agent has a different timeline on responding to query letters, so be patient. Don't mention that you have submitted this book to other agents, or rejections. For a nonfiction work, send a proposal. For fiction, complete the manuscript before you query an agent. Do not phone or visit the agent if you haven't received a reply. Send your query letter to only one agent at an agency. If this agent is not interested, you may send it to another agent in the same agency (unless otherwise instructed in their submission guidelines.) Follow up with each agent if you haven't heard back within 4 weeks to 3 months.

Excellent books on Query Letters and Pitching:

***Making the Perfect Pitch: How to Catch a Literary Agent's Eye*, by Katharine Sands
ISBN: 0-87116-206-7**

***The Complete Idiot's Guide to Book Proposals and Query Letters*, by Marilyn Allen and Coleen O'Shea
ISBN: 978-161564045-4**