

Unicorn for Writers Nonfiction Book Proposal Guidelines



- WHY** – Most editors at publishing houses make a decision to request the submission of a non-fiction manuscript solely on a book proposal.
- WHAT** – The proposal will be about 40-50 pages; it can be longer, depending upon how many sample chapters are included.
- HOW** – White 8½ x 11 20 lb. paper
 Font – Times New Roman 12 pt. or Arial 11 pt. (All computers have these fonts. If you use a different font, another computer to may change it into a hard to read font.)
 Double-spaced

ORGANIZATION of INFORMATION

TITLE PAGE: Header: (appears at the top of every page of the proposal)
 Top Left – Working Title by Your Name

Top Right – page number

Center the Working Title about 3” down from the top. Use a font size large enough for the title stand out.

In a smaller font size, center your subtitle under the title.

In a still smaller font size, write by [small b] Your Name

At the bottom right (in 11 pt):

Your Name

Your Street Address

Your Town, State, Zip Code

Your Phone Number(s)

Your email address

Your Website (if you have one)

IMPORTANT: Start each new section at the top of a new page, with the appropriate TITLE centered at the top of the page in 14 pt.

Page 1: Proposal Table of Contents (**not** the Table of Contents from your book)
NOTE: You will be able to enter the correct pages *after* you finish the proposal.
Set the space between lines at 1½, not double.

Page 2: Book Summary: One-Page Book Summary of your manuscript; the shorter it is, the more chance the editor will read it. Think of this as a mission statement; see how few words you can use to capture the essence and the excitement of your book. Your first sentence is crucial – draw the reader in.

Page 3: (+) Author Bio(s) – Non-fiction is all about credentials; list them all [Do not write this in sentences.] Many editors will turn to this page first. We recommend you add photos of all authors of this work.
NOTE: Each author will have his or her separate Bio page.

Page 4: (+) Endorsements – If you have any comments about your manuscript by experts in your field, list them here, including short quotes. If not, skip this page.

Page 5: (+) The Market – who will buy your book; this can be as many pages as you need. Be specific: Civil War aficionados. Avoid general terms: Women.

Page 6: (+) The Competition – List books in print that are currently selling in bookstores, on Amazon, and are available at libraries. You can do this research online. How many books to list? Agents recommend between 10 and 20. Choose books most like yours that sold well. For each book. list:

Name of Author, *Name of Book [in italics]*, year published, publisher, ISBN#

In a new paragraph, say what is good about this book.

In a new paragraph, explain why your book will augment this book or serve the readers in a way that this book did not.

NOTE: This is one of the most important sections of your proposal, your chance to prove the value of your book to an agent or editor.

This section may as many pages as you need.

Page 7: Manuscript specifics – Illustrations; maps; graphs; color or b&w; large size (coffee table); large print, etc.

Page 8: BOOK Table of Contents

Page 9: (+) Foreword to your book, especially if written by a know professional in your field.

Page 10: (+) First Sample Chapter: Include the entire chapter; this must be Chapter 1

Page 11: (+) Another chapter. Choose any chapter you like, but not the final chapter. If your chapters are short (five pages or less), you may include 3 or 4 sample chapters.