

# How to Format a Manuscript

By George Sheldon

The following pages of this report include a sample manuscript format. This example is more or less standard. It is accepted by editorial staffs.

It is strange that although we use computers and word processors today to create our documents, the standard format editors prefer is one that looks like it was created on a typewriter. Don't opt for a fancy layout. Keeping to this simple format is always best.

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## HOW TO FORMAT A MANUSCRIPT

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Preparing a manuscript for submission to a publisher is simple. Always use standard white, 8½" x 11" paper. Always choose to use Courier 10-pitch / 12-point type, or as near as you can manage it, on one side of the paper. Don't opt for a fancy font, just because you have the capability to create documents with them. The text must be double-spaced. Always use

left alignment, which creates ragged right margins. Margins should be set at 1" on all sides.

Indent the first line of a paragraph by using the tab. Do not add an extra blank line between paragraphs. Although your computer and printer are capable of fancier layouts and fonts, do not be tempted to use them.

Never turn in a manuscript that is not page numbered. It is best to create a page header. The page header should identify the author, story, and page number on each page after the first, flush with the right page margin: Jones / Mississippi River Boats / 2.

A manuscript is never stapled or bounded. Use paper clips only to hold the manuscript pages together. Be sure to use the correct size clip.

In the upper left corner of page one, type the author's real name, address, phone number, and email address. Also include an approximate word count, your tax id or social security number, rights offered, and your copyright notice. You should round the word count to the nearest 10, 25 or 50 words. For example, if you have an article that is actually 917 words, it is ok to say the approximate word count is 920, 925, or 950.

You can also indicate if this is a "Disposable Copy" if you only want the editor's reply but not the actual manuscript returned. (This saves on postage costs for you.

When using your word processor, make sure the hyphenation setting is off.

Type the title and author's name (or pen name) centered about halfway down the first page. This is the byline that will be used when the work is published. The title should be in upper case.

Always remember that on the last page, you must include an indication that this is actually the end of the story: "###," "The End," or "-30-."

If you follow these simple rules, your manuscript will be properly formatted and acceptable to publishers. Sure you can use a Times Roman font, if you want, but you might submit to an editor that will not accept it. It is always best to follow the rules to make sure you have prepared the manuscript properly.

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