

MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The good presentation of your manuscript is vital. Don't ruin your chances by sloppy presentation. Spelling matters, so does punctuation and layout. Your manuscript says everything there is to say about you as an aspiring professional author. It is vital that your manuscript is error free, spell checked, proof read and laid out in a professional manner. You can't assume that correcting the spelling and punctuation is something that can be left until later. Remember; it's your work and it tells us all we need to know about your attitude as a writer. After all, if you can't be bothered to spell and punctuate properly, why should we be bothered to read it?

If you are in any doubt, consult any published book by an established author. The format is standard throughout the industry; in England we use single quotation marks for dialogue. When that dialogue is followed by a descriptive passage such as 'said Roger' do not under any circumstances capitalise the *s* of *said*. This applies even when the speech ends with an exclamation mark or a question mark.

Many of the errors we see every day in our office are very common. We have therefore compiled these short guidelines which are not intended to be comprehensive, however the rules are universal and this little guide is free. Every publisher expects the same thing from you, so please read it thoroughly before you submit your manuscript, and please also remember these guidelines are not intended to be exhaustive; they merely detail the most common errors.

WHAT YOU DON'T WANT TO HAPPEN IN OUR OFFICES

'This manuscript looks good, the synopsis reads well and everything is properly presented,' said the Assistant Publisher in astonishment. 'I've read two hundred this morning, but this is the one for us!'

'Are you sure of that?' demanded the Editorial Director as she scurried across the room and picked up the document. 'It seems to have been well proof read and edited, but you do not have my nose for a fast seller,' she barked at the hapless Assistant Editor, 'I love anything with an amphibious undercurrent, "The Case of the Blue Horned Frog"'. It certainly sounds intriguing, a frog with a blue horn eh? As you know I am a pushover for books about frogs with blue horns, looks like it's certainly worth me taking the time to read it.'

'You bet!' said the Assistant Editor warming to the theme, 'but it's not the horn which is blue in this case: it is in fact the frog.'

'Surely then the title must be "The Case of the Blue Horned-Frog"', said the doctrinaire Editorial Director 'anyway, frogs are always fun... what's the author's name?' continued the Editorial Director still bristling with enthusiasm.

'Billl Smith,' said the Publishing Assistant, 'it's unquestionably an unusual spelling, looks like a great marketing ploy on the part of Billl.'

'Certainly is,' said the Editorial Director 'I've never seen it spelled that way either!'

'No hang on... it's Bill Smith, it's a bloody typo!' uttered her assistant in exasperation.

'Well frog or no frog let's not bother reading it then. Time for lunch everyone?' exclaimed the Editorial Director. 'Claridges or the Ritz?'

PLEASE STRIVE FOR PERFECT PUNCTUATION AND SPELLING

- Use 1.5 line spacing.
- Use a standard font such as Times New Roman, Cambria, Garamond or Georgia.
- Use font size 12.
- Indent paragraphs (using the paragraph formatting menu – do not rely on the space bar or tabs).
- Except as a section break, do not leave a double space between paragraphs.
- Dialogue should always be treated as a new paragraph, and should always be indented.
- If a speech by a character is interrupted by a descriptive line, and then the speech continues, this all counts as one paragraph. Do not split it across two paragraphs.
- Always indent and begin the next paragraph with the next speaker.
- The purpose of punctuation is to avoid ambiguity.
- Commas are used to avoid absurdities such as in the following sentence which was a favourite in the office. – ‘The lady equestrian approached the paddock and loudly exclaimed ‘*I am ready to ride Roger.*’ As Roger was her companion, and not a horse, we assume the writer should have remembered to insert a comma between *ride* and *Roger*.
- On occasion the hyphen is similarly vital so as to avoid vagueness and incongruities. *The blue horned frog.* Is it the frog or the horn which is blue? If it is the frog, then a hyphenated *blue horned-frog* makes things nice and clear. We are dealing with the blue variety of the species with horns.
- Lists of adjectives are tedious and should be avoided, but if you must use them, check to see if any should be hyphenated. You can have a drill hall, but a play performed in the hall takes place on a *drill-hall stage*.
- Semicolons link two related sentences; the second of which is intended to expand upon or add a new perspective to the previous sentence.
- A semi-colon adds more emphasis than a comma, but not as much as a full-stop.
- Colons are used where one sentence is intended to announce the next. The application of the colon is easy to remember: use the colon when the first sentence announces the next.
- The most common mistakes of all concern the apostrophe. You must get this right.
- **It's** stands for **it is**. *It's cold outside!* said Roger staring at the blue horned-frog.
- **Its** signifies **the object belonging to something**. *Roger could not believe his eyes, its horn was not blue at all!*
- Her **daughter's** bed means the bed of the daughter, singular.
- The **daughters'** bed means the bed belonging to more than one daughter, plural.
- Do not attempt to advance the plot by listing the doubts of the protagonists.
- Do not begin sentences with *And*.
- Do not begin sentences with *But*.
- Do not introduce a new event with the phrase *just then*.
- Avoid clichés *like the plague*.
- On checking your manuscript if you find errors such as those above you need to either go through everything with a fine tooth comb or hire a professional proof reader and editor. We cannot recommend the latter course of action highly enough.