

manuscript format

INDUSTRY STANDARDS

These are general Industry Standard Guidelines. While these standards might vary slightly within the industry due to individual preference, this is the preferred format for your freelance editor. As a suggestion, read through this full guide before starting on the steps. Note that some steps can be done simultaneously to save time.

Once you've followed this checklist, then congratulations! You now have a manuscript formatted to industry standards! Check out the images after the checklist for an example of what a correctly formatted manuscript looks like, including specifics of each of the instructions below. Read the pages for additional instructions.

TITLE PAGE

The first page of the manuscript will be the title page, which should be single spaced with no headers. I've sent a demo page [GENERIC FIRST PAGE] so you can fill it out and copy/paste it into your own manuscript.

Your title page should include the following in 12-point Times New Roman:

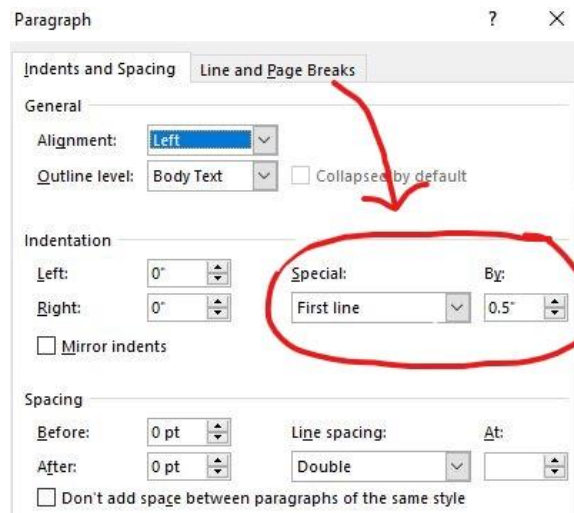
- TOP LEFT CORNER: contact details.
(Legal Name, Address, Phone Number, Email, Website)
- TOP RIGHT CORNER: the word count to the nearest 1,000.
- Halfway down the page, center align the text and put the TITLE of your book in all caps. Do not bold, italicize, or underline it.
- Two lines below the TITLE, write your name as you'd like it to appear on your cover. This can be your legal name or your pen name, whereas the top left corner must be your legal/contract name.
- At the bottom of the page, put the category in Title Case. (Category is Adult, Young Adult, Middle Grade, Chapter Book, Picture Book, etc.)
- Below that line, put the genre in Title Case. (Paranormal, High Fantasy, Space Opera Science Fiction, etc.)

On the next pages, you can add the front matter before the first chapter (such as dedication, table of contents, copyright page, epigrams, song lyrics, poetry excerpt). This will come right after the Title Page, though these pages are optional. Start your first chapter next (as seen in the example below).

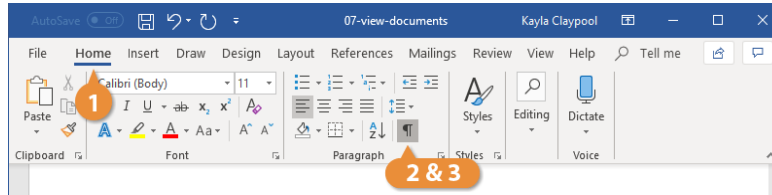
NOTE: For authors seeking traditional publication, agents want to read your words so don't add a dedication or other matter before your first chapter when querying. That will come later.

MANUSCRIPT CHECKLIST

- DOCUMENT FILE NAME.** Save the document as *Lastname_TITLE_type of edit_date*.
Example: Rowling_Chamber of Secrets_RR_07312023
- For the date, use eight numerals, NO periods/dashes. Month (00) Day (00) Year (0000)
- Abbreviate the type of edit.
 - Developmental→Dev (Rowling_Chamber of Secrets_DEV_07312023)
 - Reader Report→RR (Rowling_Chamber of Secrets_RR_07312023)
 - 50 Page Reader Assessment→50RA (Rowling_Chamber of Secrets_50RA_07312023)
 - 1st Chapter→CH1 (Rowling_Chamber of Secrets_CH1_07312023)
- FONT.** Use 12-point Times New Roman font in black type.
- MARGINS.** Set the margins for your document to 1 inch on all four sides.
- ALIGNMENT.** Align to the left-hand side (except where otherwise specified); the right-hand side should remain jagged. Do NOT justify the paragraphs.
- SPACING.** Paragraphs should be double spaced with no extra spaces between paragraphs.
 - STEPS:** Select full manuscript (use control + A). Open “paragraph” settings. Make sure that “before” and “after” is set to 0. Set line spacing to double.
- SPACING BETWEEN SENTENCES.** One single space after each period.
 - STEPS:** Each period should be followed by ONE space (not two). Find and replace all double spaces with single spaces to fix this error. In the find bar, insert two spaces. In the replace bar, insert one space. Select “REPLACE ALL.” Repeat this process (just hit the “Replace all” button again) until there are 0 replacements made. That will help in case you had any rogue triple spaces lurking around.
- INDENTATION.** Indent new paragraphs and each new section of dialogue, with the exception of the opening paragraph of each chapter or scene break. Do NOT indent the paragraph by hitting the tab key.
 - STEPS:** Go to Home-->Paragraph-->Indentation-->Special. Set a first line indentation to 0.5.



- **CHAPTERS.** Begin every chapter on a new page.
 - **STEPS:** View the paragraph marks. Go to HOME-->PARAGRAPH-->PARAGRAPH SIGN [¶]. Scroll through the document and find each new chapter. (You can easily find it using the search for “chapter” to take you to each section.) Make sure there is a hard page break between each chapter. To check for this, on the previous page there should be a line that says “-----page break-----¶” that will indicate there is a hard page break at the end of the chapter. If this is missing, you will need to create a page break. To create a page break, press [CONTROL]+[Enter] keys on your keyboard.



- **CHAPTER TITLES.** Whatever you use for your chapter heading (Chapter One or Chapter 1), center the chapter title and put it in all bold letters. (Optional: You can choose to keep chapter titles left or right aligned if you feel that is better for your formatting. Make sure all title matter is aligned the same.)
 - **SUBTITLE.** If you have a chapter subtitle (such as the chapter name, naming the point of view character, the date, etc.), put that below the chapter number. If there is a time gap (EXAMPLE: *2 Years Later*) that would be printed within the book, Insert it two lines above the chapter header.
 - **SPACE.** After the chapter header (or subtitle line, if you have it), press the [Enter] key one time so there is a space before the header and the 1st paragraph of the chapter
 - **CHAPTER BREAK.** At each mid-chapter break within a chapter, center a hash sign (#) or three asterisks (* * *).
- **END.** Write ‘The End’ at the end of the novel. This will reassure agents and editors that pages aren’t accidentally missing.
- **ITALICS AND ALL CAPS USAGE.** Use italics for italicized words. Never underline in novel manuscripts. Never (or, if you must, very rarely) use ALL CAPS in the manuscript for dialogue, shouted text, etc. Exceptions can be if it is in a text message or email type of correspondence contained within the manuscript, or if you feel it necessary for emphasis (see how J.K. Rowling uses ALL CAPS).
- **RUNNING HEADER.** Create a header aligned to the top right side. Do NOT make the running header part of the body of the page. Instead, double click at the top of the page to open the header of the manuscript to create your running head. Insert your last name in all caps, a key word from the title, and the page number.

To insert page numbers, put the cursor in the top right corner (where the page number should be). Go to INSERT-->HEADER & FOOTER -->PAGE NUMBER-->CURRENT POSITION

EXAMPLE: ROWLING / CHAMBER OF SECRETS/ 2

NOTE: The page number will automatically show page 1 of the manuscript as page 2 or 3. To correct this in your section settings, change the page number to start at 1 for the first page. For more information on how to do that, click [here](#).

If your title is longer than three words, abbreviate your title by using 1-3 keywords

from the title. HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS → CHAMBER OF SECRETS

OPTIONAL FORMATTING

You can see examples of this type of formatting in the examples following this page. (Please note: following this style is strongly encouraged and will *really* help the editor.)

- ❑ **LONG QUOTE.** If you have a long quote, such an **excerpt or a letter**, indent one inch on both the left and the right side for long quotes. These can be single or double-spaced, though single spaced is preferred. Add an extra space both above and below the long quote to set it apart from the rest of the body. Do NOT put these in a different font.
- ❑ **SHORT QUOTE.** For **signs** or **short handwritten notes**, center the text and include an extra line break before and after the text.
- ❑ **MESSAGING.** For **text messages, instant messaging, direct messages** or **social media posts**: Center messages if you only show one message at a time, and indent one half inch on both sides of the text. If you show a dialogue/conversation (text messaging), right-justify the POV character and left-justify anyone else. This then creates a conversation that is easy to follow. How you designate the characters' identities is up to you.

For more advanced instructions, skip to page thirteen. While you don't have to make these changes for your editor, they will love you if you do.

Author's Legal Name
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Phone Number
Email address
Website

word count: 68,711

TITLE OF THE NOVEL

by

Pseudonym or Author Name

Category

Genre

Lastname / TITLE KEYWORD

*If you have a dedication,
You should put it in italics
and center it here
But this is only for Indie authors*

Lastname / TITLE KEYWORD

"If you have a quote or something that will go at the front of the book, put it here. But
this is also only for Indie authors."

-Said No One Ever, *This is the Book if Needed*

CHAPTER ONE

Chapter Subtitle (optional)

Do not indent the first paragraph. You can manually move the indent slider over for each initial paragraph of a chapter or section, or you can create its own paragraph style a zero-inch indent. I call my paragraph style Body No Indent.

Each of the following paragraphs should have an indent of half an inch. This is an example of what your chapters should look like. The writing itself should be aligned only to the left hand side of the page, which means the right hand side looks jagged or uneven. Use black 12-point font in Time New Roman as this is found on every computer and accepted by most professionals.

Use double spacing with no extra space in between paragraphs unless you are signaling a scene break within the chapter, which you can do by centering a hash sign or three asterisks on that line and then starting again on the next line. Whichever one you choose, be consist throughout the novel. Because this is how you signal the transition in a scene or time. Don't use if for every paragraph in a novel; instead, indent each new paragraph except those paragraphs starting a chapter or those starting a new scene after a line break.

NOTE: You can start the CHAPTER TITLE at the top of the page or 5 spaces down so it can be more readily found.

A new chapter always begins on a new page about one-third of the way down, which is about five-to-seven hard returns. After you center your chapter heading (Chapter One in the case of this example), leave a blank line before starting.

#

There are a few other little items to remember when formatting your manuscript; one is to use single spaces after periods. Another is to use italics for *italicized words*.

For the headers in your manuscript simply have a keyword from the title in the top right header with the page number and your last name, as shown in the header above.

For text, instant, or direct messages: Indent one half inch on both sides. Center messages if you only show one at a time, but if you show a dialogue, I find it helpful to right-justify the POV character and left-justify anyone else. How you designate the characters' identities is up to you.

Friend: Hey.

Me: Hi.

Here's a long message that we'll add line breaks to so it looks more like a text.

Yeah. I think my phone only allows like 32 characters per line or whatever. But 6ish words is about right, too. Really you can add line breaks wherever, like poetry.

I created a new message here by hitting "enter" like usual. Enter *line breaks* by holding shift while you press "return."

You're adding a line break, not
a new paragraph.

If you're typesetting an actual
book and not submitting a MS,
then I still recommend right-
justifying single-line texts,
like the "Hi" above, but...

For signs or short handwritten notes: Include an extra line break before and after, but
center. It helps set the text apart for the reader.

FOR SALE: apples
Come 'n get 'em!

For long quotes, song lyrics, excerpts, or letters, or emails: Indent one inch on both the
left and the right side for long quotes. These are single spaced with an extra line break both
above and below, to set them apart from the rest of the body. They can also be italicized, which
can be good for a song lyric or a quote. Just remember that italics are hard to read when the text
is long.

Dear Reader,

This is a letter or lengthy handwritten note (longer than a few words). Indent 1/2
inch on both sides (I prefer 1 inch). Short handwritten notes can be formatted like
signs, below.

Remember you don't put these in different fonts. You let the typesetter or
designer choose the typeface, or make the decision after it has gone through an
editor because different font types distract from what is being written here.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

To finish up, you can leave one double-spaced blank line down at the end of the manuscript before writing THE END in all caps. You want agents and editors to know they've reached the end, though this might also be a personal preference depending on whom you submit it to.

Remember, this is just an example of what your page should look like. Please check formatting guidelines for more information.

THE END

*This is the Spaceship name
Part of Spaceship
Date: Unknown
Time: Unknown*

Chapter Title

Do not indent the first paragraph. No matter how short.

Each of the following paragraphs should have an indent of half an inch. This is an example of what your chapters should look like. The writing itself should be aligned only to the left hand side of the page, which means the right hand side looks jagged or uneven. Use black 12-point font in Time New Roman as this is found on every computer and accepted by most professionals.

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* * *

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For the headers in your manuscript simply have a keyword from the title in the top right header with the page number and your last name, as shown in the header above.

Four Years Later . . .

Chapter Title

Do not indent the first paragraph. No matter how short.

Each of the following paragraphs should have an indent of half an inch. This is an example of what your chapters should look like. The writing itself should be aligned only to the left hand side of the page, which means the right hand side looks jagged or uneven. Use black 12-point font in Time New Roman as this is found on every computer and accepted by most professionals.

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optional manuscript formatting

OR THINGS TO DO TO AS AN INDIE AUTHOR TO MAKE YOUR TYPESETTER LOVE YOU

BE CONSISTENT WITH YOUR PUNCTUATION

Publishers have their own in-house style guides, but most American Publishers (if not all) will use the *Chicago Manual of Style*, and only deviate their own style guide with slight variances or where there are gray areas.

ELLIPSES (...)

The Chicago Manual of Style's preferred option: three periods with five spaces (d . . . b)

Why is this important? The problem with CMOS's preferred option is that those internal spaces need to be non-breaking spaces, otherwise if the ellipsis falls at the end of the line, it might look like this .

Or this . .

. . . which is really horrible typography.

Our Advice: It's best to get in the habit of just putting the space between your ellipses as you are writing.

How do you do it? Search for each of these and replace it with the proper (d . . . b).

- three periods without spaces (d...b)
- Word's auto-formatting: an ellipsis special character (d...b)
- Three periods with a space before and after (d ... b)

EM-DASHES

Your editor will keep track of em-dash and en-dash and when to use which one, but knowing the basics of when to use which will help you as a writer.

The Chicago Manual of Style's preferred option: either two hyphens or one em-dash, no spaces.

How do you do it? Search for each of these and replaced with the proper (d—b)

- One hyphen (d-b)
- two hyphens without spaces (d--b)
- an em-dash surrounded by spaces (d — b)
- an en-dash surrounded by spaces (d – b)

CHANGING INCH MARKS " TO SMART QUOTES ""

The Chicago Manual of Style's preferred option: the smart quote (or curly quote) is used.

How do you do it? If you already have all the quotation marks typed, you can simply do a find/replace all automatically by typing (") into both the find and replace boxes and selecting "Use wild cards" before hitting "replace all." Some might format awkwardly, but your copy editor/proofreader will catch any of those issues.

Repeat the process for foot marks ' and prime ' to turn them into apostrophes ' or single quotes ' and '.

If you cannot fix the quotation marks automatically, then you'll have to do several Find/Replace searches. But first you need to search for all soft returns / line breaks / carriage returns (see below) in your document and replace them with paragraph breaks.

Once you are sure all of your paragraph breaks are consistent, follow the F/R searches below to manually fix all of your quotation marks:

Find: [space]["] Replace: [space][left curly quote "]

Find: [paragraph break*]["] Replace: [paragraph break][right curly quote "]

Find: ["][paragraph break] Replace: [left curly quote "][paragraph break]

Find: ["][space] Replace: [right curly quote "][space]

Repeat for double prime " and foot marks ' and prime '.