

Letting Go: Sending Your Manuscript to Your Editor

By Barbara McNichol

You've found the right editor and received a written proposal that defines your writing project. You've read the editor's proposal carefully, asked questions, and made sure you understood the services it outlines. This proposal becomes your "gentlemen's agreement" and your track to run on going forward.

Now it's time to turn your manuscript over to your chosen editor. This phase proceeds more smoothly (and you come across more professionally) if you format your manuscript using generally accepted industry guidelines. These guidelines aren't carved in stone, but they have been gleaned from acquisition editors, various printed sources, and editing experiences with two major publishers.

Follow these guidelines:

- Put only one space between sentences. Two spaces is a holdover from the days when writers used typewriters. Computers use proportional spacing, eliminating the need for two spaces between sentences.
- Double-space text, and use a 12-point serif type (such as Times New Roman).
- Make margins a standard 1" left, right, top, and bottom. The default for MS Word is 1.25" for the left and right margins, so you'd be wise to change the default to 1".
- Set the alignment flush left, ragged right, never justified.
- Indent five spaces on the first line of a paragraph rather than putting a space between paragraphs.
- Don't center titles using tabs or spaces; use the centering function.
- Use all caps sparingly; they're hard to read.
- It's more common to use italics than bold for emphasis. Avoid underscore—it looks amateur and can be confused as a hyperlink.
- Learn to use the automated Table of Contents function. It's a tremendous help as you add and update chapters. To do that, you need to embed Styles into your headlines. That function is worth learning on Word. So is Insert Footnotes, View Headers/Footers, and many others.
- Show ellipsis with three periods with spaces between each and a fourth period when you want a thought to trail off at the end of a sentence.
- When you print out your document, use only one side of the page.
- Put your name, title of book, and page number in the header at the top of each page, even your phone number or email in case pages get separated from the title page. Some authors also add the copyright symbol and year.

You'll find that taking time to format your manuscript and comply with these guidelines makes you look more professional and saves time reading through it. Of course, you can ask your editor to do the formatting, ensuring it's consistent throughout. But turning over a clean manuscript to your editor certainly makes the job easier and more enjoyable.

Barbara McNichol, Barbara McNichol Editorial, writes and edits articles, website copy, book proposals, and manuscripts for authors and entrepreneurs. Contact Barbara at Editor@BarbaraMcNichol.com.

**Add power and persuasion to your writing.
Contact Barbara today!**

Barbara McNichol Editorial

520-615-7910

887-696-4899 (toll free)

Editor@BarbaraMcNichol.com

www.BarbaraMcNichol.com