

Some information about manuscript format:

Publishers expect your work to be professional from the very first look. You don't want to signal that you're an amateur with no knowledge of how to submit your work. That makes many editors suspect the work itself won't be worth their time to read!

Always use standard, white paper and doublespace. You may choose either Times New Roman typeface or Courier, 12 point, but others are not as welcome on an editor's desk because they can be harder to read. (Rule Number One: Save your creativity for the story itself.)

If you're still using a typewriter, plan on retyping pages that contain more than one whited-out word. And if your work gets soiled or dog-eared while it's being submitted to one publisher after another, re-print or re-type. You don't want to advertise that other editors have rejected it!

Beginning on the next page is an example of how your work should look going to a publisher - or to one of my workshops:

Your [Legal] Name
Street Address
City, State and Zip Code
Phone Number

[approx: 00000 words]

TITLE OF YOUR SHORT STORY

by

Your [Publishing] Name

If you use a psuedonym, it goes on the "publishing" line. This is what the first page of your manuscript looks like. Notice all the spacing, and where block capitals are used. Use standard-sized, white bond paper, one side of the page only, new black ribbon and a clean typeface if you're typing. And no fancy typefaces (mark italicized passages by underlining). Double-space, with generous side margins, also at the bottom. And you aren't going to staple the pages together, or bind them; use a paper-clip.

(Notice how we didn't leave an extra space between the paragraphs here?) You won't be able to get very much on the first page, so make an extra effort to include the "hook." You want the editor (your first reader) to move on to page 2. You must proofread and correct any typos neatly with whiteout. But if there are more than three corrections to a page, re-type.

Here's the second page (and all the rest). Note that your identification info is at the top, right hand of the page so it doesn't intrude when the editor reads your story. Use your last name, a distinctive word from your title, and the page number. Keep this brief, and use lower case. Put this info on every page after the first.

The appearance of your manuscript is vitally important. Sloppiness says "amateur!" And what editor wants to fill his/her expensive pages with amateurish junk?

If you need to mark the passage of time, or a major scene change, use a "space-break" like the one above: five asterisks centered on the line where text would otherwise have been. All these rules are standard, professional. Don't invent your own.

Never fold the manuscript. Mail it flat in a manila envelope, and include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) if you want it back. You don't need a letter to introduce a short story, unless a specific editor encouraged you to "try again." Don't send your manuscript registered, insured, or anything other than first class. If it gets "seedy-looking" from going the rounds, re-type it! You don't want to advertise it's been rejected.

On the last page, you should include a note to that effect, centered, right after the last line.

LAST PAGE