

## **FORMATTING A CHILDREN'S MANUSCRIPT**

Unless you decide to self-publish, and depending on the genre, style and size, there will be many different places where you can try to send your manuscript; be it agent or publisher. Each will have their own requirements and variances when it comes to formatting. Today we are going to focus on the final submission process as you format your children's manuscript, and the associated documentation, ready for the PRINT format submission part. This can be tweaked slightly for other types of books, but it is the best way to start the formatting if you've not done it before.

### ***1. Your Contact Information***

The first step when you prepare your new manuscript is to put your contact information on it. That information should include:

First and Last Name

Address

Phone Number

Email

This information goes on the title page of your Word document, although some submission requirements may state differently. Always ensure you double check the specific submission guidelines before sending your manuscript off. We suggest you keep the details single-spaced, placing them at the bottom of the title page.

Note: For email submissions and first pages, this information won't be included, unless of course, you are submitting to an agent or an editor and are attaching a copy of your manuscript.

### ***2. Your Target Reader & Word Count***

If formatting a children's manuscript, in the upper, right-hand corner of the title page you should include your target reader and word count. If you don't know who your book is for, then research Google or Amazon for the different age levels for children's books similar to yours.

It is probably preferable to give an approximate word count on larger manuscripts, although you should list the exact word count in picture books. If you're writing a chapter book, middle-grade, or YA novel, we suggest sticking to approximate word counts.

Note: This information will be left off when you copy and paste your manuscript into the body of an email for submission. If you keep it in, it will mess up your formatting.

### ***3. Your Title and Written By***

Halfway down the first page of your manuscript you should include the title, the word ‘by’ and then your name, to show who the author is. The title should always be in full capitals when formatting your manuscript while the written word ‘by’ can be standard lowercase. And the name of the author is again in full capitals.

Picking a title can be one of the hardest things to do, but here are a couple of tips you should try to focus on when choosing yours:

Is it related to your story?

Does it make the reader curious?

Is it enticing?

Hopefully this will help you get past the submission process. Although, if accepted, don’t be surprised if the editor wants to change it later!

### ***4. Name, Title, & Page Number in the Header***

There is some disagreement over how to complete your header when formatting a children’s manuscript. Or any manuscript for that fact. Always, always check the submission guidelines. Generally the header should include your last name, the title of the book, and the page number. It should also be aligned to the right. Do not put numbers at the bottom of the page.

Note: You should keep this format for ALL submissions except where you copy and paste any manuscript into the body of an email. It will help make sure that your pages don’t get lost whenever someone prints out your story.

### ***5A. Illustrator Notes (Picture Books Only)***

For authors who are not creating the images for their books, when plotting your perfect picture book, you need to make Illustrator Notes, and, if relevant, page break notes. These will be aligned to the right side of the manuscript, under the line that you need the note for.

For example: If you are writing an illustration-heavy manuscript (in other words a story with more pictures than words then the notes will need to be well-thought-out, creative, and detailed in order to intrigue an agent/editor.

You cannot use words or phrases that people cannot picture, such as a charging herd of Womblezees from the planet Grud. It needs clarification.

The same also if you have an obscure character or introduction to the story. Let's say your main character is Fred but he's a cat the whole time, or if you are using a narrator's voice but it's an aunt talking to her niece.

Of course, if the book is accepted by the publisher there is no guarantee they will use your suggestions. Often publishers may want to, and probably will, use their own illustrator, creating images to suit they way they see them matching the story, not you. In this case you will have to bite the bullet and stay quiet, especially if you want that publishing contract.

### ***5B. Chapter Breaks (For Longer Manuscripts Only)***

When formatting a children's manuscript which have a lot of chapters, don't be tempted to include a table of contents. It's not necessary. Remember, you only have a few seconds to catch the attention of an agent or editor. You don't want to lose them by listing all your chapters up-front, especially, as they won't have any reference to the story or characters. Instead, simply list your chapter in the story. You could spell them out, making them bold so as to signal a page break, but you don't have to. Whatever you do keep consistency for all. For example: if you spell your numbers out, then they should all be the same. And likewise with bolding the letters.

Those are the main elements when formatting a children's book. Remember, be sure to include contact info, target reader, word count, header information, and title. And, if you have any references or an author's note, add those at the end of the manuscript.

There are some industry standards you should note:

Use Times New Roman 12pt font, and double-space your manuscript. Also, ensure you follow

each agents or publishers SPECIFIC guidelines; double checking before submitting your work.

*If you need help with any aspect of your writing then check out our website for details of the resources, workshops, podcasts and other services we offer all writers; or email us at [contact@mentoringwriters.co.uk](mailto:contact@mentoringwriters.co.uk) and we will endeavour to assist you along your writing journey.*

All the best with your formatting.

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