

## How To Write A Kick-Ass Query Letter: Just The Stats, Ma'am.

### **Write What you Know/Know What you Write:**

The first step to writing a terrific query letter is to know what it is that you're writing. Are you writing fiction or nonfiction? If you're writing fiction, what genre and/or sub-genre (historical romance; cozy mystery; epic fantasy)?

### **Size Does Matter: How long is your manuscript?**

If you are writing fiction, you have probably finished the manuscript and you're now looking for an agent (or editor), so you know the approximate length (word count) of your material. You should have checked the industry standards of various genres (cozy mysteries, for example, between 60,000-85,000 words; thrillers are closer to 100,000 words; contemporary romances (not category) are 95,000-100,000; fantasy novels are 90,000-140,000).

### **Complete or Not Complete, That is the Question:**

Have you finished your manuscript? Most agents/editors only want to see material if it has been completed. There are some instances in which this is not the case, but it's generally accepted that you should only query if your material is complete.

### **What I Like About You!:**

Now is the time to wow us with your fantastic credentials. You've published with major publishers in 10 languages and sold over 10 million copies? That's what we want to know! Okay, maybe you haven't had such luck. However, have you sold at all? Won any contests? Earned your MFA in Creative Writing? Studied with a major author? Member of any professional organizations (RWA, MWA, Sisters in Crime, etc.)?

## **Name, Date and Serial Number, please:**

Okay, maybe we don't need your serial number, but please, PLEASE be sure to give us your details. We need your name, address, phone number and email address. If your material has been in our inbox for a while, we need to know, so we look to these details!

## **It's Like, You Know...**

Like or As. Similes. Comparisons. A helpful tool is to compare your work to others of a similar nature. Of course, I'm sure yours is much better, but still, humor that NY Times Bestselling author and compare her book to yours.

## **What's it all About, Alfie?**

Don't let the agent/editor guess the storyline. Put it down in a couple of sentences. This should be one short paragraph that summarizes the whole book. If you have your elevator pitch, this is where you put it. If you don't know what an elevator pitch is, ask someone. You should be able to boil your story down to just a few lines. However, with those few lines you need to capture the agent/editor's attention. So, make sure you mention what makes this story SPECIAL.

## **Let it Flow, Let it Flow, Let it Flow:**

Now you need to combine all of these elements together into a cohesive, coherent one-page pitch. Pay attention to spelling and grammar. Make sure the letter "reads" well and doesn't sound disjointed or fragmented. This is where the agent/author will be checking out your writing style.