

## Publishing a Picture Book

### Have you...

- read 100 books in your genre and compared your manuscript to them?
- edited your manuscript to under 1000 words?
- had ms edited by a critique group or paid editor?
- had someone read it aloud to you OR taped yourself reading it?
- put the ms down for a few weeks or months and read it afresh?
- run a final spell-check and grammar check?
- formatted your manuscript properly?

### Manuscript Formatting:

- One-inch margins on all sides
- On the first page:
  - Authors name and address in upper left-hand corner
  - Word count in the upper right-hand corner
  - Title and author's name halfway down page
  - Story starts two-thirds way down page
- For the rest of the manuscript:
  - Double-spaced, Times or Arial font
  - Use paragraph style text, with no page breaks. Indent only for dialogue and new scenes.
  - Include page numbers and title or last name in footer

### SUBMISSION PROCESS:

- 1) Research Publishers to come up with a Top Ten List.
  - The [2012 Children's Writer's and Illustrator's Market](#) or an online database such as [www.signaleader.com](http://www.signaleader.com) presents an overview of publishers. Go through the database and make a "favorites" list based on:
    - publishers working in your genre
    - publishers who are accepting unsolicited manuscripts (those not represented by an agent) and simultaneous submissions (you are submitting it to more than one publisher at a time.)
  - Publisher's websites will list the most up-to-date information; search for "submission guidelines" and learn:
    - **What to submit:** Editors generally want to see an entire picture book manuscript. You should still include a cover letter to introduce your ms and yourself.
    - **How to submit:** Publishers will ask for email or mail submissions, directed to a "Submissions Editor." Improve your time in the slush pile by directing your query to a specific person instead; if you can't find editor's names on website, call the publisher's front desk to ask.
    - **How long they take.** Typical response time is 6-9 months. Example: "*Due to the high volume of submissions, we respond only to manuscripts of interest to us. All other manuscripts will be recycled. If you have not heard back from us after three months, you may assume we do not have a place for your project and submit it elsewhere.*"

- 2) Write a one-page query letter that is targeted to each specific publisher.

- **1st Paragraph: THE HOOK:** Introduce your book, telling what it is about, who the main character is, how long it is, and especially what makes it a must read. Read book jacket copy or book reviews for ideas.
- **2nd Paragraph: WHY ME?** Introduce yourself and tell the publisher why you are the best person to write this book. List any previously published work or relevant writing or professional experience. Include links to your website or blog if appropriate.
- **3rd Paragraph: WHY YOU?** Tell the editor why you are targeting their company specifically. Include book titles they publish which are similar in tone or theme, or text from their website which describes your book.
- **4th Paragraph: CLOSING.** Say what you're attaching: a manuscript, a SASE, and any additional info (photo reference for nonfiction books, for example). Close politely, thanking them for their time.

### **RESOURCES:**

Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators: [www.scbwi.org](http://www.scbwi.org)

The Children's Book Council: [www.cbcbooks.org](http://www.cbcbooks.org)

Children's Writing Supersite [www.write4kids.com](http://www.write4kids.com)

Cynthia Leitich Smith: [www.cynthialeitichsmith.com](http://www.cynthialeitichsmith.com)

The Purple Crayon: [www.underdown.org](http://www.underdown.org)

Viva Scriva: [www.vivascriva.com](http://www.vivascriva.com)

The Colossal Directory of Children's Publishers: [www.signaleader.com](http://www.signaleader.com)

*2012 Children's Writers and Illustrator's Market*, Chuck Sambuchino

*2012 Guide to Literary Agents*, Chuck Sambuchino

*The Business of Writing for Children*, Aaron Shepard

*It's a Bunny-Eat-Bunny World: A Writer's Guide to Surviving and Thriving in Today's*

*Competitive Children's Book Market*, Olga Litowinsky

*Formatting & Submitting Your Manuscript, 3rd Edition*, Chuck Sambuchino

*The Writer's Guide to Crafting Stories for Children*, Nancy Lamb

*Writing With Pictures: How to Write and Illustrate Children's Books*, Uri Shulevitz

*Writing Picture Books: A Hands-On Guide from Story Creation to Publication*, Ann Whitford Paul

*The Horn Book Magazine*, [www.hbook.com](http://www.hbook.com)

*Publishers Weekly*, [www.publishersweekly.com](http://www.publishersweekly.com), spring and fall issues dedicated solely to children's books