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A Castle
In a Flying City
Hidden by a Thundercloud

1100 words

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MANUSCRIPT FORMATTING

by Zena Shapter

INTRODUCTION: FORMATTING MANUSCRIPTS

Standard manuscript formatting is Times New Roman, 11 or 12pt, 1½ or double-spaced. Manuscripts are formatted this way so work can be easily read, edited and/or critiqued. In the publishing world it also allows editors to estimate the word count and accurately determine how many pages will be required to produce a book using the page size, style, and type font of their choice (see Chapter 2). So it's good to get into the habit of formatting your work in this way.

There are some differences, however, depending on what and where you're submitting. For this reason, Chapter 1 deals with the way manuscripts should be formatted when submitting to me personally. Most of these guidelines will also apply to Chapter 2. Chapter 2 then deals with how to format your manuscript for general submissions in the publishing world.

CHAPTER 1: SUBMISSIONS TO ZENA

For me, please format your work according to the following guidelines so it's easy to read, critique and/or print out your work.

There's no need to include a separate title page – please just follow on from your contact details and title. Your contact details need only include your email address. No address or phone number is needed. These contact details go in the upper left corner of the page. Word count goes in the upper right corner (computer-generated word counts are fine). Your author's name (real name or pseudonym) follows the title on the by-line and should be shown as you intend it to appear when/if published. All of this should be single-spaced.

All text should then be left-aligned with a ‘ragged’ right margin (not justified) and be 1½ spaced to save on paper. Please use single spaces between your sentences (double spaces between sentences are a bit corporate). All paragraphs should be indented, apart from the first paragraph following any significant break.

The best way to indent paragraphs is to select the paragraphs you need to indent, then go up to ‘Format’ and click on ‘Paragraph’. You’ll see a dropdown menu under ‘special’. Select ‘First Line’ and the default indent of 1.27cm will apply to the paragraphs you’ve selected.

Paragraphs are not to be separated by additional blank lines, or by adding ‘spacing’ before or after them. Instead paragraphs should just flow on from each other. When inserting a scene break, please centre a hashtag ‘#’ on a line of its own (see below), then left-align the following initial paragraph.

#

Note how this first paragraph is not indented, as it’s your first paragraph after a scene break. There’s no need to add an extra line space before or after the hashtag.

“When people are speaking,” says a character, “their speech should be inside double quote marks and punctuation should be included inside those quote marks.”

When using an attribution such as ‘he/she/I said’, there should be a comma before the quote mark, as above.

“Sometimes a character may perform an action in the middle of that character’s speech.” A character might scratch their head in thought for example. “In that case, use full stops inside the quote marks.”

Please include all the action and speech relating to a particular character in the same paragraph, then switch paragraphs when another character acts or speaks.

“Like this?” said Character #1, frowning.

Character #2 grinned. “Exactly like that, yes.”

Each page, except your first page, should include a header consisting of the author’s surname, the title of the work (or a keyword), and the page number (ideally ‘[page number] of [total number of pages]’).

There’s no need to indicate italics by underlining, as that’s old-fashioned now everyone uses word processors, such as computers.

When hyphenating two words, like up-to-date, please use ‘en’ dashes (which look like this: -). When inserting a pause in the middle of a sentence – like this – use ‘em’ dashes (which look like this: – or even this —).

You can use numerals for really large numbers, but please use words for small numbers and at the beginning of sentences.

CHAPTER 2: GENERAL SUBMISSIONS IN THE PUBLISHING WORLD

For general submissions in the publishing world, you should continue to use the formatting guidelines in Chapter 1, except for the following points of difference...

Firstly, you must include your full contact details, including your real name and address, telephone number and e-mail address in the upper left corner of your first page, single-spaced. After this, you should double-space your work for ease of reading online.

You should then put your title in capitals about half way down the page, and start a fresh page for your first chapter. Each subsequent chapter should also start on a new page, so insert a page break before each chapter.

Some publishers actually like you to start each new chapter about a third of the way down the page. Traditional publishing editors ask this so they can estimate how thick a book is likely to be, because computer-generated word counts don’t always reflect this. Instead editors count pages. Properly prepared manuscripts, with twenty-five lines of type to a page and an average of ten words to a line, are assumed to contain 250 words on each full page. Partial pages, where the text covers half or less of the available space, are counted as 125 words for the publishers’ purposes, except for the first pages of chapters or short stories which are counted as full pages. Once the initial word-count has been calculated, it gets rounded up to the nearest 1000 words (100 for short stories).

For general submissions in the publishing world, you may also be asked to ensure that your top and bottom margins are set to allow for twenty-five lines of text per page (not including the page header). Left and right margins should be set to allow for an average of ten words to a line in order to accurately assess the final word count. In publishing terms, one ‘word’ equals six characters (including punctuation and spaces), thus each line of text must allow for a maximum of sixty characters of text. A

good amount of space in your margins does ensure that all your words are included when those reading your work print it out for review!

Finally, bare in mind that other publishers may request that you underline italics or that you put double spaces between your sentences – just check their submission guidelines. Good luck!