

## The ABC Writing Formula: Part 2

Now let's plug in the ABCs of letter writing:

### **Paragraph 1 = ANNOUNCE the main message**

This should be a short paragraph = 3-4 sentences maximum, if you include an Attention grabber.

First, you need to create **Awareness/Attention** to your product (AKA the book). Do this up front —include a logline that makes the editor/agent take notice.

Next, you need to succinctly state your MAIN MESSAGE. What is the MAIN MESSAGE? Unlike other business letters, this one is easy to find, **you have a particular product that you want the Reader to request and ultimately buy.**

Content to include (in no particular order):

- \* the title of your manuscript,
- \* word count,
- \* is the manuscript complete?

— word of advice, new authors are only going to sell on completed manuscripts (it's the only way to prove you can "do it") so make sure it is before you query,

- \* genre,
- \* line, if applicable,

[I hope you recognize all this information from your General Information file!]

- \* what, if anything, is included with the query (ie. submission guidelines ask for a query, the first three chapters and a synopsis),
- \* if this is a COVER letter you also need to state when and where you met the editor/agent and that they requested the information

### **Paragraph 2 = BODY of Facts presented**

This section can vary slightly depending on whether or not you are sending a Query letter with or without other supporting material. Obviously, if you are trying to generate a request for the manuscript and synopsis, you will probably want to include a longer persuasive argument. Here is where you generate INTEREST and DESIRE for your product. How do you do this?

Consider using a pitch or blurb as a mini synopsis. Remember, it should contain the vital points of character and GMC with all those buzzwords.

Depending on the type of story you have written, you may wish to also include a brief paragraph regarding research, setting, or other key element that makes this book unique. The objective here is to highlight a saleable feature — remember, the Reader will be thinking Marketing and if you give her/him a ready-made selling point, you've done their work and gained yourself that request.

Finally, you need to create a paragraph about YOU. Pick, choose and synthesize the Writing Resume information you collected.

A word about another continuing question— what to do if you haven't done anything and don't have any/many credentials? Bottom line, you have a short paragraph and, as time goes on, you build on your slim start. A second bottom line —if the story is good an Editor/Agent will request more regardless of how much experience you have.

That said:

- \* DO list the fact you were/are a contest judge or hold/held a position in your chapter
- \* DO list any contest finals or wins
- \* DO list any other writing credentials
- \* and of course, DO list a book sale or release

### **Paragraph 3 = CLOSE on a positive ACTION**

This paragraph sounds a lot more exciting than it really is. In other types of persuasive business letters, you would certainly have to state the exact action you want your reader to take, but here, well, either you've been persuasive and your product fits or it doesn't. You cannot demand that the Reader request more material, you can only offer the most direct route to doing so.

Content to include:

\* clearly state how the editor/agent can contact you, this is important even though you may have listed the information elsewhere. Remember, to initiate immediate action you need to have the information within easy reach. For an email query you'll notice I include my email address as part of my signature block rather than in the closing paragraph. I do this because all the editor needs to do is hit reply to respond, but I still want to cover my bases.

\*if you are writing a Cover letter, you can also bring up the original meeting again to reaffirm that personal connection.

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