

Queries & Proposals

A GUIDE ON HOW TO STAND OUT IN THE SLUSH PILE



Pitching your book can feel intimidating—but it doesn't have to be.

Whether you're a fiction writer crafting a one-page query or a nonfiction author putting together a full proposal, the goal is the same: capture attention and communicate value.

This guide is here to demystify the process. You'll find straightforward checklists, essential dos and don'ts, and real-world tips to help you stand out in an agent's or editor's inbox. We've worked with hundreds of authors at every stage of the journey, and we know what gets noticed—and what gets skipped.

Your story matters. Let's make sure the people who need to see it actually do.

HERE'S HOW TO PITCH SMART

► Understanding the Purpose of a Query or Proposal

Fiction = Query Letter

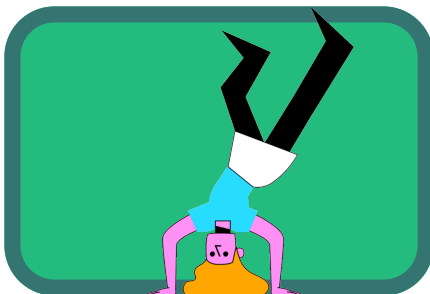
Think of your query as a meet-cute. It is a 1-page cover letter for your book, which includes your hook, your pitch, and your credentials.

Nonfiction = Book Proposal

This is your business plan. Pitch your idea for the book, your authority on the topic, your audience, and where/how it fits in the market.

GOAL

Convince the agent/editor that your book is sellable, that you're the right person to write it, and that readers will want it.



► How to Stand Out to Agents & Editors

- Let your voice shine through. Don't sound robotic, overly formal, or like AI
- Be concise, clear, and confident
- Show your understanding of the market you're writing for
- Demonstrate professionalism and readiness to collaborate
- Make sure you have read about each agent's/editor's specific submission guidelines
- Personalize your queries/proposals

FICTION QUERY LETTER CHECKLIST

✓ **START WITH A COMPELLING IDEA**

Use a one-liner that pulls the reader in. Think emotion, conflict, or voice.

✓ **INCLUDE A MINI SYNOPSIS**

This paragraph should introduce the protagonist, the central conflict, and what's at stake.

✓ **ADD COMPARATIVE TITLES**

Choose 2-3 comps published in the last 5 years that show where your book fits in the market.

✓ **CLOSE WITH INFO ABOUT YOU**

Include writing credits, relevant background, and information about your author platform.



- Don't overexplain plot twists
- Don't include full chapters (unless specifically requested)
- Don't be over-confident ("This is a guaranteed bestseller!")

NONFICTION PROPOSAL ESSENTIALS

✓ **OVERVIEW**

Tell what the book is about, who it's for, why it matters now.

✓ **MARKET ANALYSIS/COMPS**

Show what's out there—and what makes your book different or better.

✓ **AUTHOR BIO**

Include why you are the best person to write this book. Include credentials, experience, and platform highlights.

✓ **SHARE YOUR PLATFORM**

Include details about your audience: newsletter list, social media following, speaking gigs, podcast appearances, etc.

✓ **CHAPTER OUTLINE + SAMPLE CHAPTER**

Include a roadmap of the book's structure and 1–2 polished chapters to showcase your voice.



- Don't make exaggerated claims about the impact of your book
- Don't omit platform details
- Don't be vague about your audience

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