



Fiction Feedback

Approaching an agent

Identify an agent who handles the kind of novel you've written. One way to do this is to find a book which has similarities to yours on the bookshelves and check the acknowledgements. An author almost always thanks their agent.

Then check out their entry in *Writers' & Artists' Yearbook*, and especially their website for up-to-date info on if they're open to submissions and what they're looking for right now.

Then study carefully how they want the approach to be made. Every agent is different: one size does not fit all.

Material reproduced below was from the website of **A M Heath**, a major London literary agency and contains helpful and succinct info to how to approach an agent.*

*NB Such information can change regularly. Please consult the website of A M Heath and any other agent immediately before submitting.

Tip: once you've identified an agent who you think might be interested in representing you, follow their *individual* instructions for submissions to the letter.

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A M Heath Literary Agents

What to put in a covering letter

We'd like to know what kind of book you're writing – what genre and market you think it fits into, and two or three lines about the story (keep this brief, we don't need a full synopsis in your letter). We'd also like to know whether you have any writing experience – have you been on a creative writing course, have you been published before (including short stories, online and in magazines), have you ever self-published? And we'd like to know a little bit

about you – a little bit about your job and your interests, perhaps, or anything else you think is interesting. (Max 500 words)

What to put in a synopsis

We don't need (or really want) to know every twist and turn of your plot before we actually read it – a synopsis should simply expand on the few lines from your covering letter to give us a better sense of plot and characters, and an idea of where the story is going. Definitely don't feel as though you have to use up all of the 1,500 word maximum.

How to format your submission

Please double space your manuscript, and make the text (at least) 12pt, preferably Times New Roman font. Please make the file .doc or .docx – not a pdf.

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Every agent has different submission requirements. Do follow them.

Tip: Sometimes you might have more success through being introduced to an agent at an event such as a literary festival or talk. If you do get such an opportunity, try to establish if they'd be interested in a submission, and get their email address. Then in your covering email, make sure you courteously remind them of where you met and that they suggested you send your stuff. This approach can mean:

- a) They will look at your submission even if officially they're closed to submissions
- b) If that agent is on holiday or has left, another agent is more likely to take a look
- c) They will look at your submission with more interest than a speculative one from someone they don't know.

Fiction Feedback Hints for Impressing an Agent

- 1) Be concise and business-like
- 2) Do not make any spelling or grammar errors in your email or covering letter (or indeed any other part of your submission)
- 3) **Always** be respectful and courteous
- 4) **Never** make threats (eg 'you'll regret it if you don't take me on') or extravagant promises (eg 'I'm the next JK Rowling').
- 5) Remain professional in your approach at all times and remember agents are the ones who can help *you*.