



The **fiction proposal** includes the one page cover letter, the synopsis and sample chapters.

The cover letter is similar to the query letter in content. The difference is the query is sent to editors who don't want the proposal first. In a query you are asking for permission to send your proposal. Some editors or agents want to see the query letter and will decide if they want you to send the proposal.

The cover letter, however, accompanies the proposal. The editor or agent either prefers proposals or has agreed to view your proposal after reading your query letter.

For the format, check out *The Query Letter* article.

The synopsis is a brief summary of your book. Editors differ on the requirements so make sure you follow their guidelines. One page or two pages is usually the standard.

The synopsis includes major and minor plots. It is the worst writing you'll ever send to an editor, but that's ok. Here the mantra is TELL don't show. Don't use descriptive words, just tell what happens. Leave nothing out. It is

a running narrative, so don't break it into chapters. You don't have room for extras anyway. If you are sending a digital copy, attach it as a pdf.

Send the sample chapters according to the editor's or agent's guidelines. Some only want a few pages; others say fifty maximum. Most want the first three chapters or first fifty pages. A title page is helpful. Center the text and include the working book title, author name, author contact information and date submitted. The editor only glances at it, perhaps, but it identifies your manuscript in the slush pile.

The important thing is to use whatever layout they prefer: readable type, size font, spacing and margins. If you are sending a digital copy for your sample chapters, attach it as a pdf.

**For non-fiction proposals**, in the short (one sentence) and long (75 words) pitch, the cover letter should include the purpose of the book or the premise—three sentences maximum. A good format is to identify the problem, its solution (according to you) and how to apply it.

Also state the distinctive difference your book possesses from others on the market. What will readers take away from an encounter with your book? What action will they take? How does your book encourage them to take this action? (For the rest, refer to *The Query Letter* article.)

The proposal includes the premise, the take away or unique selling point, a brief outline of the book (half page), manuscript data (complete or unfinished, word count, features), marketing details and author information. Each of these may be organized as a section. A chapter by chapter synopsis should also be included in the proposal.

These may differ in format depending on the guidelines of your chosen editor and agent. Be sure to follow their rules.

We've already covered what the premise should include and the selling point content. The outline should be brief. The outline divisions should follow the problem, solution, application format and provide points made for each.

Next include if the manuscript is finished, and if it isn't, when do you propose it will be? The word count is listed along with any graphs, tables or special features.

The marketing section is important. It should identify your audience in detail. What is their age, income, gender, education, marriage status,

location– anything that is appropriate to your topic. This is similar to creating a character in fiction. But this person is the one who will be interested in your book, and it is worth the time to sketch who they are and what they need. What groups might they already be connected to in a marketing sense? Who would they follow on FB or Twitter? What books might they already be reading?

Another point to cover in the marketing section is identifying your competition and how your book is unique. A lot of books on the topic prove interest so don't be discouraged in that regard.

The author section is your chance to sell you. Why are you uniquely qualified to write this book? How will you help market it? Do you have a platform? Have you written any other books that have been published? Were they successful?

Remember to include a chapter by chapter synopsis. A chapter title and three to five sentences telling the content of each is sufficient.

Send the required sample chapters or pages that the editor or agent prefers. This is usually two or three chapters.

Some advice– humility and respect are appreciated. Hard sells are...annoying. You are never going to stiff-arm an agent or editor into accepting your proposal if your writing is below par or your idea is not developed. Most editors like to decide for themselves if your book will make Ellen demand to interview you. ~~Begging~~ ~~Harassing~~ Calling an editor repeatedly will not better your odds. Focus that energy on becoming the best writer you can be and developing your ideas.

Follow these tips and one day you will get a thumbs up from an agent.