



## Submitting work to a literary agent or publisher

Agents have little time to read work – the interests of existing clients always has to come before looking for new ones. To submit work to an agent with the best chance of success try the following:

1. Buy the Writers & artists yearbook for a full list of agents and contacts.
2. Target agents who deal with a similar genre/style to your own. Look at the acknowledgements pages of books whose authors have a similar style to you and approach the agents (who are usually thanked!).
3. Use any personal contacts you have plus agents you have made an effort to meet at conferences, courses etc.
4. A submission for a novel will include: letter, synopsis & sample:
  - The Letter: give some background info on yourself; nature of the book (eg young adults; psychological thriller); why it should be published; why you have chosen this agency. Be business-like. Don't mention the 'slush pile' or copyright issues. Do mention other writers who might be in a similar market.
  - Synopsis: Maximum 2 pages. Make the font and spacing easy to read. Do give the whole plot.
  - Sample: Send the first 50 pages (setting up the plot). Realistically maximum 3 pages will be read - about the same amount as a customer in a book shop.
5. When writing you need to be clear about the market for your book. It is best to fall into a defined genre (eg romance). Each editor in a publishing house will need to defend this book to their marketing team. Most books lose money and don't 'earn out' their advance (ie make any further royalties than that given as an advance). £1000 can be a typical advance currently.
6. It may take months to get a response. Receiving a standard rejection letter doesn't mean to say that the work hasn't been read or discussed. Some agents will offer a consultancy service for a longer feedback/critics service for a fee.
7. Ensure your book has all the usual aspects of a well written fiction work:
  - Plot: sense of direction and shape to the plot (some sort of mystery/ missing fact/ need to achieve something)
  - Points of View: from one or more characters
  - Characterisation: do have a main character that people care about
  - Style: keep it simple, don't overwrite

Thanks to Elizabeth Cochrane of Greene & Heaton