

FORMATTING TEXT

There is nothing worse than a badly set-out manuscript.

What we're talking about here is **formatting**, and just as the old saying "you can't judge a book by its cover" is wrong – a good cover is more than half the battle in trying to sell a book – so good formatting is absolutely essential in submissions. Find out the style that your likely target agent or publisher prefers and give them that. Don't try to convert them to something else, something better, and above all don't assume that it's the agent/publisher's job to deal with your badly formatted manuscript. Authors would be amazed how bad the state of some of the stuff is when it arrives – using different fonts, different spacing throughout, different font sizes. There really is no excuse for this.

Let's be clear about what we expect at Comely Bank Publishing. Send it in:

- as an A4 Word document;
- in a serif font (those little lines at the foot of the letters – e.g. the 'l' in Times New Roman);
- 12 point, single space;
- make any chapter titles 12 point **bold**;
- use indents, not line spaces, at each new paragraph (that's because we deal with fiction);
- don't indent at the start of chapters, or new sections within chapters;
- take a new page for each new chapter, or better still, a new *section*;
- include page numbers at the foot centre of the page if you can;
- use double quote marks for direct speech, single quotes for everything else.

Never, never, never use the tab key, or space bar, to move text around. These always have to be stripped out one by one. That's because we publish both in print and as an ebook, and ebooks do not like messed-about formatting. Usually, we have to destroy all formatting and start all over again, but one day someone will make our job easy.

Stephanie Zia's *Self Publishing Ebooks: The Absolute Beginner's Step-by-Step Guide To Ebook Publishing* is a wonderful guide on publishing ebooks, available on Kindle for next to nothing (under \$3.00), and it's also great at showing you how to format Word documents **properly**.

Other publishers and agents like double spacing, the first 50 pages and so on. We can really only deal with you when you think you've got a finished book, so our requirements are different.

Gordon Lawrie