

**ELECTRONIC MANUSCRIPT (MS) LAYOUT - INDUSTRY STANDARD**

(Adapted from a paper by internationally best-selling author

**John Harman** - johnharman.com)

Each publishing company has its own 'house style' covering such matters as abbreviations, contractions, proper names etc. What follows are the general rules of MS layout, which are applied by most publishing houses.

A three-page sample MS which adheres to the rules herein is attached at the end of this document for your information.

**HARD COPY**

- If 'hard copy' manuscripts (MSs) are required (i.e., for submitting by post or hand-delivered) these must be typed on white A4 paper of not less than 80gsm and be printed only on one side.
- If in hard copy, the MS must be 'loose' - i.e., not be stapled or bound in any manner. Therefore it is essential to number the pages properly (a dropped MS cannot be re-assembled correctly otherwise).
- To identify pages that may get lost or mislaid (or even, God forbid, mixed up with other MSs in a busy office), place a 'header' (the *title* of the book) in 8pt at the top of every page of the MS. It's best immediately preceding the page number. The header is the equivalent of the 'footer' you see at the bottom of these pages

**'SOFT' COPY/ELECTRONIC**

- File format: Word for Windows® electronic files are the industry standard. You stand the best chance of success if an editor can open the file and start reviewing your story immediately. Other formats that 'open' natively in Word may be acceptable at the discretion of the publisher (Rich Text Format (RTF) and 'plain text' for example might be acceptable is the rules that follow are adhered to. However you should avoid submitting files in 'exotic' formats like Apple 'Pages'® and other third-party word processing packages. Even programs like 'Open Office'® and 'Scrivener'® allow exporting an MS as a Word document and, in fact, the latter can be set to automate most of the rules in this document. PDF files should NOT be submitted.

**GLOBAL**

For both electronic *and* paper MSs, the following formatting rules should be followed:

- Spacing: All MSs must be double spaced (but NOT double-double spacing between paragraphs. *This* document is an example of double spacing.
- **All** pages must be numbered. Top right is best.
- Beneath the very last paragraph on the very last page, print END.

- Typeface must be 12pt - in either:
  - Arial
  - Times New Roman
  - 'Courier'
  - 'Garamond' or
  - A similar clear, easy-to-read font. (This document uses Courier). Using an 'exotic' font runs the risk of that typeface not being installed on the computer on which they MS will be read (and therefor a substitute font being displayed) and that can lead to all sorts of unintended formatting and readability issues - so stick to the 'safe' common ones.
- There must be a margin at the top, bottom and both sides of the printed area of a minimum of 3cms.
- Never use 'full-justification' on your MS (the feature that makes print flush to both sides of the page). Why? 'Full justify' creates variable spacing between letters and increases the number of words per page. Experienced editors, if they need to, can estimate the number of words so long as the page isn't fully justified.
- All new chapters must start on a fresh page. Chapter Numbers must be spelled out (in words), be in caps and be centred at the top of the page. A gap of three lines should be allowed before the first paragraph of the new chapter.

- All paragraphs must be inset one tab of about 1cm (except the first paragraph of each chapter, which is 'full-out').
- Quotation Marks. Australian publishers follow the UK custom and usually 'employ single quotation marks' like this. American publishers on the other hand "employ double quotation marks". It's your choice which you choose but just make sure it is consistent!
- Dialogue must be in separate paragraphs when spoken by different characters. No two characters may occupy the same paragraph with their dialogue.
- The MS must have a title page with the title of the work (in 18pt or similar) centered with below - by - and below that the name of the author. Also, the title page must show:
- Author Information
  - Print your real name (rather than any non-de-plume) address, phone number, fax, and email address in the top left-hand corner of the cover or title page. If you have an agent include the agent's full details here too.
  - Word Count goes in the upper right-hand corner of the cover or title page. Word count should be approximate to the nearest 100 or 500. Giving the exact word count flags you as an amateur.

- Ignoring these industry standards of layout to your MS does the same thing.

#### **GENERAL ETEXT PRESS CONSIDERATIONS**

- MSs must be presented, as far as practicable, without typographical errors and literals. MSs containing too many errors of this sort will be rejected.
- Pornographic or otherwise objectionable materials (at the sole discretion of the evaluation panel) will not be considered.
- Travel diaries, cookbooks, children's picture books, coffee table books and other non-fiction works are not eligible for consideration in the Ripper Reads™ range. Self-publishing services are, however, offered at very reasonable prices for all these products.