

Tips from a Publisher

By Nancy Sakaduski, Cat & Mouse Press

What can I do to increase my chances of acceptance?

- If there's a deadline, leave yourself plenty of time.
- Submit according to the instructions.
- Follow guidelines, but don't be predictable.
- Be professional (no silly email address, overly familiar approach, or violations of specifications).
- Have someone, preferably an editor, review the manuscript objectively, then listen to the input.
- Proofread, proofread, proofread.
- Reread the guidelines before sending your submission.

What are some red flags publishers look for?

- Writers who submit materials clearly not appropriate for the publication or contest
- Writers who submit full manuscripts without permission
- Writers who aren't treating the process seriously
- Writers with no social media presence or communities (expecting publisher to do all marketing)
- Unprofessional manuscript formatting
- Easily correctable errors, indicating lack of interest and/or lack of attention to detail
- Projects with poor marketability (too long, too short, too narrow an audience, too similar to others)
- Cover letter with no bio information or information irrelevant to the project
- Complaints about previous rejections or problems with publishers (in the query)

What are the most common mistakes writers make?

- Sending the wrong submission/choosing the wrong publisher
- Not polishing the manuscript enough
- Not doing research on the agent or publisher to determine what they are looking for currently
- Submitting a manuscript that doesn't stand out
- Sending signals of being difficult to work with

What does a slam-dunk submission look like?

- Cover note that shows knowledge of the publisher's or agent's needs without being pushy
- Intriguing bio/pitch; respectful ask
- Well-formatted manuscript or synopsis, in the form and length requested
- Engaging manuscript with few errors, solid writing, and creative plot, characters, setting...

How do I know a publisher is legit?

- SFWA Writers Beware website: <https://www.sfwawriters.org/other-resources/for-authors/writer-beware>
- Check previous publications/talk with their authors
- Ownership of rights remain with writer

