

Carefully Crafted Query Letters

Over the years, I have sold thousands of magazine articles through query letters. Also as a book editor and former literary agent, I've read thousands of query letters from authors.

Introduction: My strange yet true stories about queries.

What is a query?

Why query?

The editor's perspective

The writer's perspective

How do I determine if I should write this article?

A four-paragraph formula to write a carefully-crafted query letter.

The Query Letter Checklist – Do's and Don'ts for writing queries

Beyond this workshop – some great resources

[How to Write A Great Query Letter](#) by Noah Lukeman (110 pages of information)

[Write A Book Proposal Course](#) This 12-lessons step-by-step course is my latest teaching about queries and book proposals for every writer. It includes five bonuses and a graduation gift over a three-month period so you craft an excellent pitch for an editor or agent.

[My FREE Teleseminar on Proposals](#) Hear a 60-minute workshop answering your ???s.

[Book Proposals That Sell, 21 Secrets To Speed Your Success](#)

[Editor Reveals Book Proposal Secrets](#) (over 3 hours of book proposal teaching)

Free Ebook #1, [Straight Talk From The Editor](#)

Free Ebook #2, [Book Proposals That Sell, Extra Special Report](#): (90-page Ebook)

[A FREE List of over 400 literary agents](#) (addresses, phone, emails).

For easy access to each link, go to the online version of this handout & click the links: <http://www.terrylinks.com/ccql>

Query Letter Checklist

Contents of the letter:

- ☐ Dynamic lead paragraph (this may start your article)
- ☐ Paragraph explanation about article contents
- ☐ Why you? -- your qualifications for writing the article
- ☐ Suggested Length and when article will be available

Mechanics of the letter:

- ☐ Typed and error free (typographical and grammatical errors)
- ☐ Use plain bond paper (no reds or green) and no fancy typefaces or fonts
- ☐ Correct name of magazine and spelling of the editor's name
- ☐ One page, single-spaced letter
- ☐ Your name, address and day-time phone number (including fax and email address)
- ☐ Adequate lead time (especially for seasonal articles)
- ☐ Self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE)

Dos and Don'ts for Query Letters:

- ☐ Don't phone an editor with your idea (unless time-related).
- ☐ Do double-check on the right editor and how their name is spelled (phone the magazine but ask an assistant for this information--not the editor).
- ☐ Do multiple query.
- ☐ Do make a photocopy of your query for your records.
- ☐ Do make a record of your submission.
- ☐ Don't mail your first draft. Wait at least a day to re-read your letter before mailing.
- ☐ Do monitor the response and follow up after four weeks.
- ☐ Do remind the editor where you met (this fact may begin your letter).
- ☐ Don't confess unfamiliarity with the magazine.
- ☐ Don't beg or plead ("My baby needs new shoes, etc.").
- ☐ Don't say, "The Lord told me..." Prove the Lord told you with excellence.
- ☐ Don't write nasty letters when rejected. Editors have reasons and long memories.

A Sample Query Letter

February 4, 1986

W. Terry Whalin
720 W. Victoria, A3
Costa Mesa, CA 92647
work - (714) 969-4600
home - (714) 722-8267

Mike Umlandt, Managing Editor
Moody Monthly
820 North LaSalle Drive
Chicago, IL 60610

Dear Mike,

“God bless all the missionaries.” How can prayer for the world be specific and practical? About 8,000 people have committed themselves to pray daily for a particular Bibleless group by name. In an instantaneous here and now world, such commitment is a rare jewel -- daily commitment to pray for a particular group until they have the Scriptures in their own language.

Fifteen years work for a single New Testament and three thousand unwritten languages seems like an unbelievable impossibility. How will they be reached? What can I do? The Bibleless Peoples Prayer Project as a part of Wycliffe Bible Translators has been in operation for over two years. The story of this project and how others can be involved is the subject of my article.

Here is a hands-on article where the reader can learn about how to get involved in the changing world through diligent, daily prayer for a people group. Results are not instant and may take a lifetime of prayer.

I am serving as a research associate with Wycliffe Bible Translators. I have been with them for 10 years writing a number of technical linguistic articles. My undergraduate degree is in journalism from Indiana University. The article could be ready within four to six weeks from assignment.

I await your response.

Cordially,

W. Terry Whalin

encl.: SASE