

Preparing The Manuscript



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Trinity School of Christian Journalism: Volume 004

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Preparing The Manuscript

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We live in a generation of "packaging". Unless it is put into a proper package, even the best product in the world does not attract customers. In the same way, every writing has to be presented in the right way if editors are even to look at it.

A few hundred years ago, when writers were not so much in abundance, and when editors had more free time than today, they would surely give attention to anything that came to their table, but today the situation is just the opposite. Your manuscript has now got to capture his attention while it competes with a large number of other submissions which he possibly cannot read in the time available to him.

Even if an editor makes an exception to this and gives time to all the manuscripts that cross his table, he is still not going to give the same attention to each manuscript thus placed. On the contrary, he will unconsciously spend more time with that piece of writing that has been presented in the more attractive way. This makes it

imperative for you to present your writings in the most attractive and readable way.

Further, you must also remember that the editors are human. They have frustrations and irritations that are peculiar to their profession and, therefore, instead of adding to their problem you should try to help the editor out of these. For example, an editor has to deal not only with substandard writings, but also with carelessly written and even illegibly scribbled manuscripts. Therefore please give plenty of attention to how you prepare your manuscripts.

In this lesson I will explain the following points about manuscript preparation:

- 1--Type all manuscripts
- 2--The stationary to be used
- 3--Dispatching
- 4--Your record keeping practices

Let us look in detail at each point:

Type All Manuscripts:

There is nothing wrong with handwritten manuscripts even at the dawn of the twentyfirst century, but typewritten material has a definite advantage in that it is more readable as well as compact. Therefore get all your manuscripts typed if at all possible.

Typing charges are not too high these days, and even if the initial investment looks too much you will reap much reward in the long run for this investment. Further, if you are a young person looking forward to twenty years or more of writing I strongly recommend that you learn typewriting yourself. It is not difficult or expensive. Just six months spent in a good typewriting

institution will make you an expert. What's more, during this period you don't have to spare more than an hour a day for it. If you have a typewriter of your own, then just three months of training and then three months of practice at home is an equally good alternative.

If it is impossible to get the manuscript

typed, then neatly handcopy it on ruled paper. What is important here is not a beautiful handwriting, but a handwriting that is highly readable without any strain.

If you are able to get it typed, or if you are able to type it yourself, then get three copies typed. Two copies should be sent to the editor, and one should go into your files for the record. In case the originals are lost in mail or in case the article is rejected but not returned by the editor, the copy in your records can be used to rewrite or retype it.

These days computers are becoming cheap, and very soon smaller machines might become cheap enough to become household gadgets. If the article is typed on a computer, then always keep a backup copy. Send two copies of the writing to the editor. Further, you must remember that these days many magazine editors are happy to receive articles on computer disks. These disks can be sent through mail, and once they make a copy of the article, the disk will be returned to you.

There are some standard practices for the layout of typed material. Some editors prefer a layout of their own specification, and that information can be obtained by writing to them. Meanwhile, you should continue with the standard layout. The standard layout is to type the manuscript double spaced (or 1.5 space, when available), on a single side of the paper. Around one to two inches or margin should be left on the left as well as on the right sides. The top and bottom margins should also be more than one and a

half inches each. A good quality carbon paper should be used so that the copy is clear.

The first page of the manuscript you submit should preferably contain the following information:

- Article Title
- Approximate Length Of The Article
- Approximate Level Of The Article (Simple, Semi Technical, Technical, etc.)
- Your Address:

After giving this information, you should leave several inches of the paper blank, and then you can continue with the following: Title (centred on the page), your name on

the right side after leaving a few lines from the title line, and then the text of the writing after leaving a few lines from the name.

Some typists do not number the pages. While this might not give any difficulty to the writer, it is greatly

inconvenient for the editor as well as the person who is going to compose your writing. Should a page drop out of the manuscript (as it sometimes happens), they would have to waste a lot of precious time to decide where it goes back. Always label the pages with consecutive page numbers. If the typist has forgotten to do it, the do so with pen.

There are some standard practices for the layout of typed material. Some editors prefer a layout of their own specification, and that information can be obtained by writing to them. Meanwhile, you should continue with the standard layout.

The Stationery To Be Used

is as important as the writing itself is. You should therefore use the best quality paper that is available to you. If you are going to get the manuscript typed by somebody else, then supply them with good quality paper if they do not use paper of good quality.

Never use thin paper called rice-paper or onion-skin paper. It is too difficult for editors to handle that kind of paper, and you should not add to their difficulties -- which are not little anyway.

Also, do not staple the papers. The experienced editors and composers find loose sheets of paper more convenient to handle, and therefore you should preferably use paper

Remember, the type of stationery you use will affect the final outcome as a relaxed editor is much more desirable than an irritated one. They too are humans!

clips instead of staples. Get good quality large size clips for use with your manuscripts.

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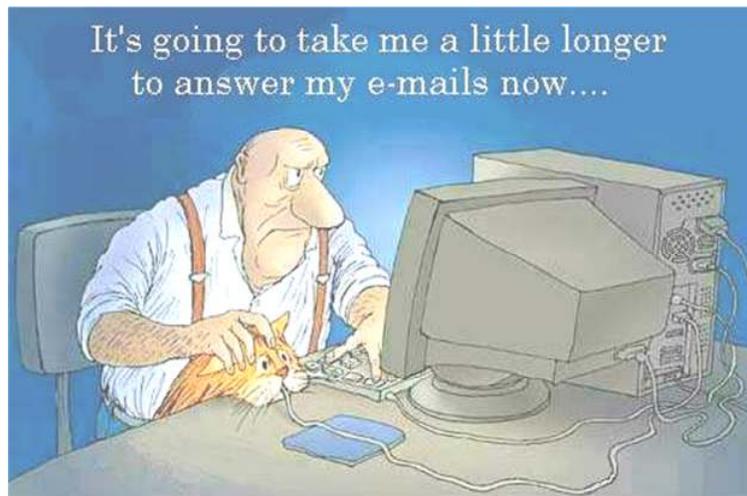
Dispatching

Always use large sized envelopes for dispatching. The large size will ensure that you do not fold your manuscript too much or too many times. It is too difficult to read a sheet of paper that has been folded mercilessly. You should always know the

current postal rates so that you mail the manuscript with sufficient postal stamps attached to the envelope.

Postal fines are very high these days and, what is worse, no editor likes to be punished for the mistakes and carelessness of others. You should not expect any sympathy from an editor after you penalize him with a postal fine.

If you want unaccepted manuscripts returned to you, then you should enclose a stamped and self addressed envelope (SASE) of suitable size with your manuscripts. Anything less than that (for returning your manuscript) is unacceptable to most editors. Some government published magazines do return rejected manuscripts at their own expense, but the number of government-controlled magazines is very small.



Your Record Keeping Practices

All writers should carefully keep a record of their writings. This is because by the time you write two dozen articles, you will lose track of the things written, sent to publications, rejected by publications,

accepted for publication, and what has already been published. This statement might look a bit surprising to you, but it is true.

An article is a single entity, but the information connected with where you have sent them to where they have been published might add as many as four to six items with each article. This means that by the time you cross two dozen articles, the potential information that you will be

chasing will exceed one hundred items. No one can keep this kind of information in his head. Many who were too foolish to do so have tasted the bitter fruits of neglect.

For example, many careless writers have ended up sending the same article to more than one publication because of sheer neglect and forgetfulness. This is a crime in the world of writing, especially if you send them to publications that pay you for using your material.

Keep detailed information about your writings in a diary or notebook with the following minimum information for each piece of writing: name or title, the date you started writing, the date you finalized it, the date dispatched, the name of publication, the date of publication, and a line or two about what this piece of writing contains.

If the manuscript is typewritten or handwritten then a copy should be kept in your files. If it is done on a computer, then you should always keep a copy on two different disks so that if one is erased accidentally then you might be able to restore it from the back up copy.

One final word of advice: If you are careless now, you will regret all your life. If you take a little pain now, then you have a whole life to enjoy the fruits of hard labour.

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



Weeping Willow Wesleyan has instituted the use of SHOCK COLLARS for members who are caught sleeping during church. **Ralphie here is a repeat offender.**

Assignments

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Please work on the following assignments as soon as possible and at the same time move to Textbook 5.

- 1- In future Observe the rules of manuscript preparation mentioned in this lesson when submitting articles to publishers.
- 2- Scan your newspaper or any periodical that is available to you. Look at the opening sentences of news or articles. Most of them will be routine and colourless sentences. However, a few of them will be exceptionally eye-catching or startling. Note down the titles and the first four sentences from three such news or articles in your diary.
- 3- Make it a point to scan your personal diary on a regular basis (say once or twice a week) to learn from the best of others



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About The Authors

Dr. Johnson C. Philip is a physicist and Christian communicator. He is also the senior-most Christian apologist in India, having trained more than 10,000 apologists worldwide through distance education. At present he serves on the faculty of several theological seminaries worldwide.



He has authored close to 100 books/ebooks and over 10,000 articles (2011) and a good number of his ebooks are available free. He is also an expert in Indian Numismatics.



Dr. Saneesh Cherian is sociology major with interest in Theology and communication. He has authored close to 50 books/ebooks and numerous articles. He was one of the architects of the first Christian apologetics and Systematic Theology textbooks in the Malayalam language. At present he serves on the faculty of several theological seminaries worldwide, including Brethren Theological College as its Academic Dean.

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Every reform movement comes to slumber in a century or less. There are practically no exceptions in the last two millennia of church history. Thus each generation needs Ezras and Nehemiahs to rebuild the foundations that were once laid down but which are in ruins now! The only solution is to go back to the Bible and its fundamentals.

The authors stand unashamedly and without wavering on the following fundamental principles: Bible Alone (Sola Scriptura), Faith Alone (Sola Fide), Grace Alone (Sola Gratia), Christ Alone (Solus Christus). With this in mind we bring to you a set of writers who stand strong on these principles.

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