

Dos and Don'ts When Querying an Agent

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THINGS AGENTS WANT TO SEE IN A QUERY LETTER

1. An entertaining but polite and professional tone
2. Multiple forms of contact information
3. Proof that you have researched and hand-picked an agent. (If you've got a connection, were referred by a client, or met the agent at a conference, make sure to point that out early in your letter.)
4. Especially for nonfiction: An author bio that demonstrates your platform and why you're the right author for this project
5. A quick, catchy hook or "elevator pitch"
6. Making a case for the book's built-in audience
7. Especially for nonfiction: Showing why your expertise and media contacts make you the best author for your project

9 THINGS AGENTS *DON'T* WANT TO SEE IN A QUERY LETTER

1. Asking what the agent can do for you, rather than demonstrating what you can do for him/her
2. Asking for a phone call or in person meeting before the agent has requested one
3. Querying for multiple projects at the same time
4. Listing personal information unrelated to your book
5. Giving references from people outside the publishing industry (such as saying your writers group, your congregants, or your mother's next door neighbor's cocker spaniel loved your book)
6. Comparing your book to a commonly-quoted bestseller
7. Making broad claims that you can't back up
8. A pitch for an incomplete novel. (It's OK to query with an unfinished nonfiction project, as long as you've written a proposal, but novels should be finished before you start contacting agents.)
9. Overly familiar, aggressive, or incorrect salutations