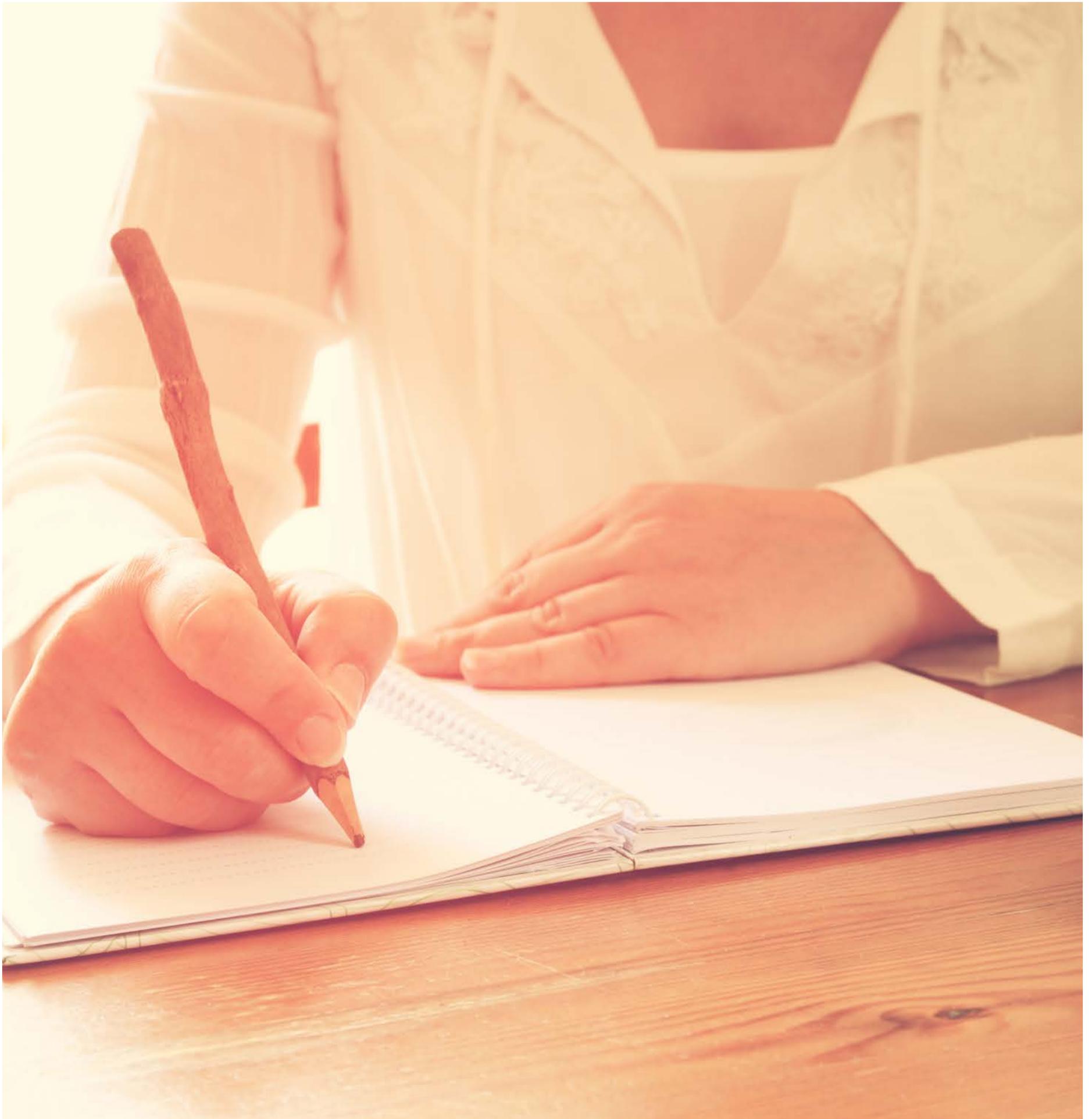


THE QUERY LETTER SOLUTION

HOW TO HOOK YOUR DREAM AGENT



author
accelerator



WHAT IS A QUERY LETTER?

A query letter is a short pitch that you write to an agent to entice them to offer you representation. The main goal of the query letter is to get the agent to request additional materials – in other words, pages of your manuscript or your whole manuscript. Many agents receive hundred of queries every day. They evaluate them very quickly, and dismiss them very quickly. Yours needs to be outstanding in order to get through the noise.

STEP 1: WHAT IS YOUR BOOK ABOUT?

Write down what your book is about in no more than 50 words. Don't try to be clever or witty, just write down the facts or the bare bones.

- If it's fiction or memoir, try to capture the plot, what happens, what the story is.

- If it's non-fiction (business, self-help, inspiration, how-to) try to capture what the reader will learn and what your main point is.



EXAMPLES

Fiction: It's the story about a woman who becomes part of the first father-daughter pair in the Senate, except she's on one side and he's on the other, and they don't agree on anything.

Memoir: It's the story of how I spent four years searching for my mother's murderer when law enforcement officials gave up.

Self Help: It's a book about what to do when you have to let go of a dream that didn't come true – like having a baby, closing a business, walking away from a marriage.

STEP 2: WHAT'S THE CONTEXT?



Readers want a sense of what world or philosophical mindset they will be immersed in. They're going to spend a lot of time with you in your book, so give them – and the agents – a sense of what to expect.

- If it's fiction or memoir, say something about the world of the story – the time period, the universe, the location. For memoir, even if you wrote your initial sketch in first person, switch now to third person. It may feel awkward to write about yourself in this way, but it's standard procedure for memoir. There may be times when you want to use a first-person format (i.e. when speaking to people in person) but third person is the norm.

- If it's nonfiction, consider the cultural and philosophical context of the issue or the problem you are helping your reader solve. Imagine giving your topic a frame.

EXAMPLES

Fiction: Set in a future when partisan politics has reached its extreme expression, this is a story about a woman who becomes part of the first father-daughter pair in the Senate, except she's on one side and he's on the other, and they don't agree on anything.

Memoir: It's the story of how an Orange County housewife spent four years searching for her mother's murderer in when law enforcement officials in both Mexico and the U.S. gave up.

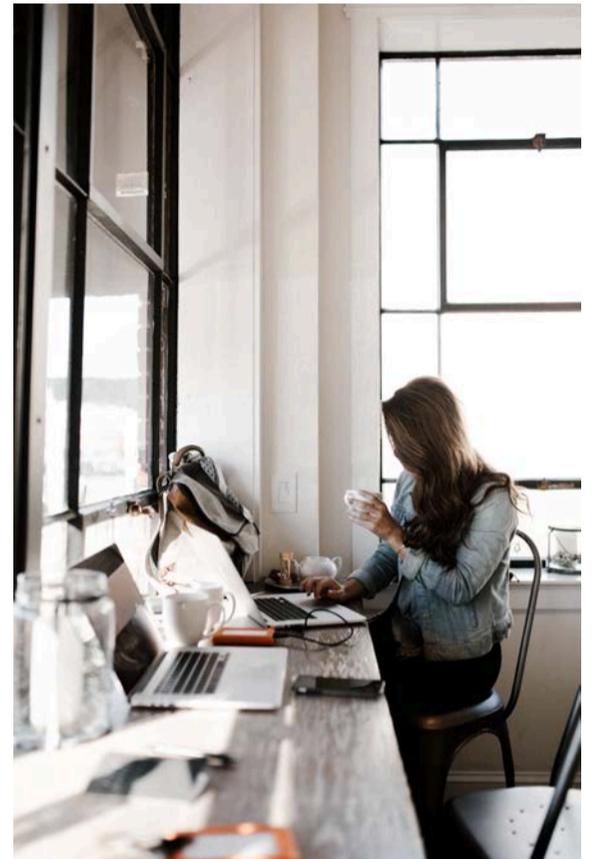
Self Help: In our “never, ever give up” culture, quitting can feel like failure. This is a guidebook about what to do when you have to let go of a dream that didn't come true – like having a baby, closing a business, walking away from a marriage.

STEP 3: WHY SHOULD YOUR READER CARE?

Readers read in order to get something very specific. They are not randomly attracted to the books they choose to spend their time on: they know what they want. They want to be educated or entertained, inspired or challenged. When describing your book, you want to tell the agent very clearly why readers are going to care.

If it's fiction or memoir, add a line or two about what readers might feel after reading your book, or what the impact on them might be. You can consider comparing your book to others in the genre, or describing it as a mash-up of two existing books.

If it's nonfiction, explain what they will learn from your book. What's the takeaway? What's the point?



EXAMPLES

Fiction: Set in a future when partisan politics has reached its extreme expression, this is a story about a woman who becomes part of the first father-daughter pair in the Senate, except she's on one side and he's on the other, and they don't agree on anything. It's a story that proves politics is always personal, and offers hope for a future where what happens in Washington is far from business as usual.

Memoir: It's the story of how an Orange County housewife spent four years searching for her mother's murderer in when law enforcement officials in both Mexico and the U.S. gave up. Many people dream of solving an un-solvable case and cracking a code no one else could touch; few people actually pull it off.

Self Help: In our "never, ever give up" culture, quitting can feel like failure and the aftermath can be deep grief. If you have had to give up a dearly held dream – perhaps having a baby, making it to the corner office, dancing on Broadway, or owning a house -- this guidebook will help you find your way through the pain.

STEP 4: MAKE IT SNAPPY AND ADD IN YOUR BOOK TITLE

Polish your description to a high shine by adding texture, details and rhythm. Allow your unique voice to shine through so that readers will get a sense of your style. Being concise is important, but you don't need to rush.

Pay particular attention to the very first line. You want to hook your reader – make her curious, make her worried, make her invested in your ideas. You might ask a question, paint a picture of someone painted into a corner, or define a world on the brink of change.

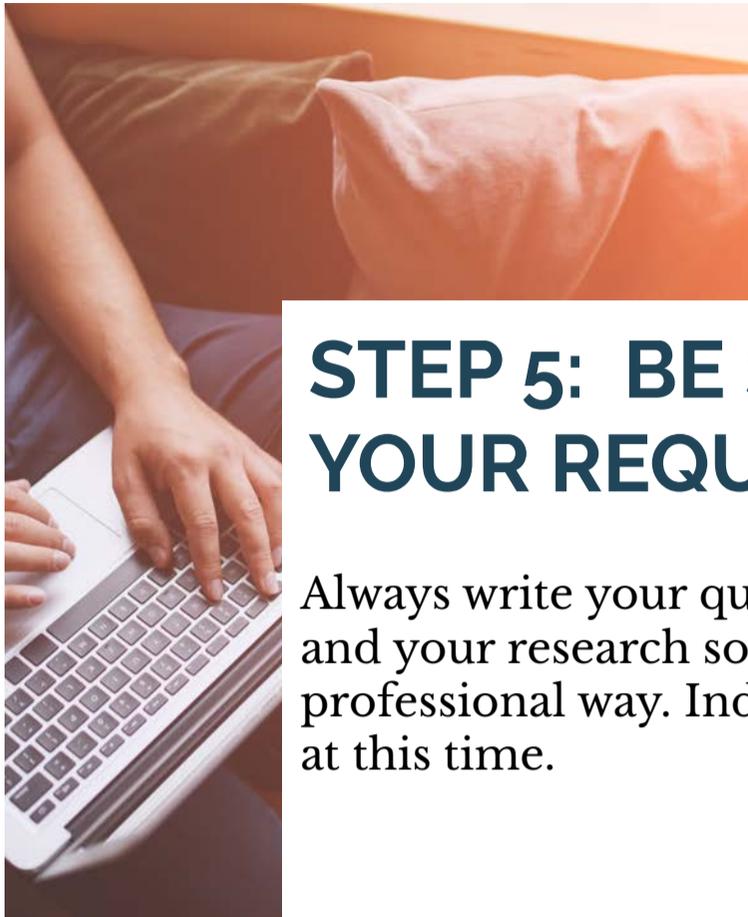
Read your description out loud to hear how it sounds, and revise until it's perfect.

EXAMPLES

Fiction: In a not-so-distant future, Washington is gridlocked because neither party will budge an inch on anything from what to serve in the Senate dining room to who will protect the people from agricultural toxins. When the daughter of a long-time conservative Senator is appointed Senator from the nation's most liberal state, the hopes of a nation are resting on the father-daughter duo to make peace – and progress. In *Senator on Fire*, politics is about to get very personal.

Memoir: When law enforcement officials in both Mexico and the U.S. failed to solve the brutal murder of her mother, Lauri Taylor, an Orange County housewife, vowed to do whatever it took to solve the crime. She spent four years in a relentless quest for the truth, and against all odds, cracked the code of her mother's case. Many people dream of solving a high profile crime, but few people have the guts, stamina, and skills to actually pull it off. *The Accidental Truth* is a story that combines a true-crime page-turner with a poignant mother-daughter saga.

Self Help: In our “never, ever give up” culture, walking away from a dream can feel like utter failure. Whether you want to have a baby, buy a house, make it to the corner office, or dance on Broadway, the mantra is to keep trying – even if the price is your health, your bank account, your relationships and your sanity. In *The Next Happy*, a guidebook to letting go, Tracey Cleantis shows you how to compassionately give up on your dream, grieve the loss, and find your next happy.



“ *No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader. No surprise in the writer, no surprise in the reader*
- ROBERT FROST

STEP 5: BE SPECIFIC ABOUT YOUR REQUEST

Always write your query to a specific agent. Do your homework and your research so that you can approach them in a specific, professional way. Indicate how many agents you are pitching to at this time.

All Genres:

_____ [Insert your book title and italicize it] is my first book and I am seeking representation. I am sending this query out to a small group of agents and selected you because

_____. [Write something personal, heartfelt and specific here. You want to show that you know the agent, understand what kinds of books she represents, and have good reason to believe you might be a good fit.]



STEP 6: ADD A SHORT BIO

Your bio is not meant to be an exhaustive recitation of everything you've ever done. The agents don't need to know every last thing about you. You want to give an overview of who you are, but mostly should include details that are immediately and directly relevant to your book and why you are the best person to write it.



EXAMPLES

Fiction: I was Chief of Staff of [Famous Senator We Can't Yet Name] for eight years, during the passing of [Important Piece of Legislation We Can't Yet Name.] Prior to that, I worked on Bill Clinton's presidential campaign, and as a White House intern, where I did research on an issue very similar to the one in my story. I am currently retired and live on an island outside of Seattle, not far from the town where part of my novel takes place. *Senator on Fire* is my first book.

Memoir: Before I began searching for my mother's murderer, I was a marketing and branding expert who worked with professional athletes, including NBA professionals, and premium lifestyle brands. I partnered with corporate clients at major sporting events to increase brand awareness and consumer loyalty through advertising, media coverage and social opportunities for customers and employees. I am a graduate of SMU's Cox School of Business, holding a Bachelor of Business Administration degree, with a major in Marketing and a minor in Spanish. I live in Orange County, California and am the mother of two grown children. *The Accidental Truth* is my first book.

Self Help: I am a practicing psychotherapist who writes from both sides of the couch, providing my readers with real world applications of psychological theories; at the same time, I frankly and openly share insights from my own work in therapy. My blog, *La Belette Rouge*, was named one of the top ten blogs for Francophiles by Blogs.com and is rated one of the top 10 psychology and memoir blogs. I also write "Freudian Sip," a column at *Psychology Today*. My work has been featured in *Psychologies Magazine*, *Redbook*, *Yahoo News*, *Salon.com*, *Forest and Bluff* and *Sheridan Road*. This is my first book.



STEP 7: WRITE A PROFESSIONAL CLOSE AND SALUTATION

Phrases to consider:

- Thank you for your consideration.
- I appreciate your consideration.
- I look forward to hearing from you.
- Sincerely



DID YOU FIND THIS DOCUMENT HELPFUL?

PRO-TIP:

Do you know you need help, but aren't sure what exactly you need?

Visit our website to start your research.



We invite you to check out what we have to offer at Author Accelerator:

BLUEPRINT FOR A BOOK

An intense weekend of live video, Q&As and building the foundation to your novel. Personalized feedback on all your assignments from a book coach within a week.

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

STORY GENIUS WORKSHOP

A 10-week program based on Lisa Cron's Story Genius method. Personalized feedback on all your assignments from a book coach.

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

MANUSCRIPT ACCELERATOR

A 6-month no-excuses for starting and *finishing* a rough draft — and finishing strong. Working with a coach is the best way to make your dream of writing a book a reality.

[LEARN MORE >>](#)