Your name   800 words
Your address
Your phone number
Your e-mail address

SHORT STORY MANUSCRIPT FORMAT

by W. Ritter

Short story manuscript format is very similar to novel standard manuscript format. This template is intended to help you easily export or print using the standard format. In fact, this PDF file was generated using Scrivener's Compile feature. It was created in Scrivener using the Short Story project template.

You should generally use a Courier 12-point font (which will print ten characters per inch). Because Courier is a monospace font (that is, all characters are the same width), it makes it easier for editors to detect spelling errors and also to calculate the approximate space your story will take up when published. Times New Roman and Arial are also usually acceptable though.

Leave wide margins all around the page--at least an inch on all sides.

Use double-spacing between lines--this gives the editor plenty of room to make corrections and notes.

These guidelines will mean that you can't fit many words on a page--250 to 300 at the most. This will give your manuscript a higher page count, but it will pay off as it will be a lot easier for the editor to read--and you want to make the editor's job as easy as possible.

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Print only on one side of the page. Your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address should go in the upper left corner of the first page of your manuscript. In the upper right corner, place an approximate word count. You can round up to the nearest hundred words, although in these days of word processors, a word processor-generated word count will probably be fine. The word count is used by the editor to work out how much space your story will take up. In Scrivener, you can insert a placeholder tag that will be replaced by your word count upon compile by using the Edit > Insert menu.

The title of your story should go roughly halfway down the first page (the editor can use the empty space above it to make notes). The title should be centred, and it is usually capitalised. Place your by-line two lines beneath the title.

This is the name you want to appear in print, which might be a pseudonym or might use your initials instead of your full name.

The first line of your story should start two lines beneath your by-line, and should be indented five spaces (half an inch) from the left margin.

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You should place a header in the upper right corner of every page of your manuscript except for the first page. The header should comprise the surname that appears in the by-line, a key word from the title of the story, and the current page number. (The header should not go in the left corner, as the editorial staff may clip your manuscript in that corner.)

Text should be left-justified with a "ragged" right margin. Some folk will tell you that you should always place two spaces between sentences, but in these days of word processors this rule is not so hard and fast any more. If you are in the habit of typing two spaces between sentences, fine; if not, it is probably not worth worrying about. Recent studies have shown that the number of spaces you type between sentences--one or two--has no discernible impact on how easy a piece of text is to read.

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If you wish a word or phrase to appear in italics, this

should be indicated in the manuscript by underlining. In Scrivener, you can use italics while writing and then just use "Convert italics to underlines" in the Transformations pane of the Compile sheet.

Em-dashes--extended hyphens that set off a phrase such as this--should be indicated using two hyphens. In Scrivener, you can use "Convert em-dashes to double hyphens" upon compile. (All of this is set up for you in the Short Story project template.)

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Line breaks in your story should be indicated by placing the "#" character between lines rather than leaving a blank line. This makes it easy for the typesetter to see where line breaks should fall. If you write each scene as a separate text document, you can have these separator characters added automatically upon compilation by using the "Separators" pane of the Compile sheet.

Finally, you do not need to make any overt indication that your story is over--you do not need to type "The End" or anything of the sort. The ending should be obvious from your story. Follow these instructions, and your short story manuscript should at least appear professional--the content is down to you!

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Much of the information contained in this document is based on a description of short story manuscript format by Matt Carless for the BBC Writers' Room website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom