

## Building a Great Query Letter

**Goal:** Clearly communicate your story's hook, market fit, and professionalism.

### 1. A query is a business letter, not a book report

Its job is clarity, not beauty.

### 2. Start with a sharp hook

Who is the protagonist, what do they want, and what's at stake?

### 3. Focus on the core conflict

Avoid subplots and worldbuilding details.

### 4. Show cause-and-effect

Each sentence should lead naturally to the next.

### 5. Stakes must be personal

Save-the-world only works if we care about *who* loses.

### 6. Keep the synopsis short

Typically 1–2 tight paragraphs.

### 7. Show market awareness

Mention genre, tone, and comparable titles (recent and relevant).

### 8. Your bio should be brief and confident

Experience matters—but passion counts too.

### 9. Follow submission guidelines exactly

This signals professionalism more than talent alone.

### 10. Rejection is not failure

It's data. Adjust and send again.

## Query Letter Checklist

### Essentials

- Polished opening hook
- 1–2 sentence setup

- Main conflict clearly stated
- Stakes personal & compelling
- Query length (1 page max)
- Proper salutation

### **Market**

- Genre indicated
- Comparable titles (if appropriate)
- Target audience suggested

### **Bio**

- Relevant experience
- Credentials (if any)
- Short + professional

### **Formatting**

- Double-spaced
- Easy fonts (e.g., Times New Roman, 12pt)
- No attachments unless requested

## **Sample Query Breakdown**

### **HOOK:**

When ordinary archivist Evie Thorn accidentally wakes a forgotten god, she must steal memories from the living to save the dead — or watch her city become a tomb.

*Why it works:* Immediate stakes + unique twist.

### **NEXT PARAGRAPH:**

Evie's only ally is a thief who remembers nothing and a historian who fears the past. As they unearth truths older than the gods, Evie must decide what she's willing to lose to stop the coming silence.

*Why it works:* Characters, conflict, choices.

### **MARKET PARAGRAPH:**

*Hidden History* is a 95,000-word urban fantasy with crossover appeal for fans of *The City We Became* and *The Bone Season*.

*Why it works:* Genre clarity + comps.

**BIO:**

Jane Doe writes about magic and memory. Her short fiction appears in *Mystic Quarterly*. She lives where the weather hates her.

*Why it works:* Concise, relevant, human.

**7 Common Query Mistakes****1) Too Much Backstory**

Agents need conflict forward, not history first.

**2) Weak Stakes**

“World peace” only matters if we care who loses.

**3) Missing Genre Signals**

If I can’t guess genre by sentence two, I’ll stop reading.

**4) Info Dumps**

Short + tight beats long + pretty.

**5) Bio That Reads Like a Resume**

Keep it relevant — tell *why you’re the person to tell this story*.

**TAKEAWAY:**

*A great query doesn’t sell your book—it earns the next conversation.*