



Bella Books Manuscript Guidelines

SOFTWARE

All manuscripts should be computer generated and available as an electronic file.

We prefer authors use Microsoft Word as their word processing program. Any program used must be easily convertible to Word.

APPEARANCE

The printed manuscript should be on 8 x 11-inch white paper, double-spaced, with *at least* one-inch wide margins all around, using one side of the sheet only.

Use Times New Roman in 12-point size set to double-spacing.

Please type your name, address, e-mail address, and phone number in the upper right hand corner of the first page, the Title Page, of your manuscript. Right under this, please include the number of words in your manuscript. Use the software's word count feature to determine the word length of your manuscript.

Number pages consecutively, beginning to end. DO NOT include any special headers and footers on the pages of your manuscript such as the title, author name and chapter number. Only the page numbers should appear on every page.

TYPE STANDARD FORMATTING

New Chapters should be created with a hard page break (any Word-compatible software will have this feature). Chapter headings should be centered and clearly marked, approximately one-third of the way down a page, for example: Chapter 10

Space only once between sentences and words.

Use a **paragraph or carriage return** *only at the end of a paragraph*. Let Word automatically wrap the text. Set tabs/indents to move in one-half inch at the beginning of each paragraph.

Use extra **blank lines** *only* if indicating a minor shift of time between scenes or a change in point-of-view within a scene. If a more significant break in time needs to be indicated, use *** centered on a single line to separate the scenes. Do not use *** for any other reason.

Set text **justified left** with ragged right edge. Do not use full justification (any Word-compatible software will have this feature).

Dash marks should be either two hyphens typed together (--) or the em-dash symbol (—). If you don't know how to create or find the em-dash symbol Word or other word processing program, go with the far easier two-hyphen style. *Never use only a single hyphen.* There should never be a space before or after dashes.

Ellipse marks for fiction are three dots, even at the end of a sentence. There should never be space before an ellipse. There should only be a space after an ellipse if it ends a non-dialogue sentence.

Dialogue is indicated with standard American double-quote marks, which *always* go outside any other punctuation pertaining to the dialogue:

- “Why me?” she asked.
- “Time to leave,” she told me. “Unless you want to linger in bed...”
- “There’s a—” She gasped for breath. “There’s a bomb!”

MANUALS FOR STYLE AND SPELLING

Bella Books uses the *Chicago Manual of Style* and *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. The following are clarifications where we may deviate from these guides or errors we consistently see in usage:

Numbers in dialogue: People do not speak digits, they speak words that represent digits. Spell out digits in dialogue unless they are particularly cumbersome (a mathematical formula or other long series of numbers) or are in common usage and would look peculiar spelled out (401k).

Affect/Effect: Affect as a verb means to influence. (Tanya's move will affect Mary's decision.) Effect as a verb means to cause. (Tanya's move effected a change in the way Mary lived.) Effect, as a noun, means result. (Tanya's move had an amazing effect on Mary.)

Afterward/Backward/Forward/Toward: None of these words have an “s” at the end.

All right: Alright is all wrong.

Okay: Spelled out in all instances; never ok.

Blonde and blond. Usage is based on feminine or masculine person being described. A woman is a blonde when her hair is blonde. Marilyn Monroe was a blonde; Robert Redford is a blond-haired man. For objects, use blond as in “The wood had weathered to a dishwater blond.”

References to time: Use hyphens, as in a “six-thirty appointment,” or “The bomb went off at seven-fifty-two A.M.” A.M. and P.M. are capitalized, with periods, no space between.

PUNCTUATION MARKS

Dashes should only be used for an interruption or to set off text—like this.

Ellipses should only indicate a noteworthy pause or trailing away of speech or thought. Often, they can be removed.

Double punctuation is incorrect. *What?!* Yes, we mean it. If both are needed, pick one mark and put the sentence in italics, as in *What?* or *What!*

Commas: We do not use serial commas. Example: The U.S. flag is red, white and blue. We also do not use commas in short sentences like, “Hi Sue.” or to set off a single word at the ends of sentences like *too*, *either* or *however*. Correct: “We find that modern fiction style has exceptions too.”

Semi-colons: Use sparingly in modern prose. A period will usually work as well.

Word hyphenation: If a word is in question, check Merriam-Webster’s. Generally, compound words formed with the following prefixes are always one word:

anti antihero over overprotective bi biannual post postdoctoral
co coauthor pre prenatal extra extraterrestrial pro prorated non nonviolent
inter interrelated re reexamine micro microeconomics semi semiannual
mid midlife sub subatomic multi multiracial un unwashed under underpaid

But, a word should be hyphenated if it can be mistaken for another word, for example: co-op/coop; re-creation/recreation.

ITALICS USE

Italics vs. Quotation Marks

Set the following in italics: books, periodicals, newspapers, long poems, plays, movies, TV and radio shows, operas and long musical pieces, record albums, works of art.

Set the following in quotations marks: chapter titles, articles in magazines, individual episodes of television and radio shows, short poems, essays, song titles.

Generally, an entire work is in italic, and a fraction of that work is in quotation marks. The Beatles’ album *Abbey Road* begins side one with the song “Come Together.” An entire work collected into a yet larger work is still an entire work. The *Ultimate Beatles Collection* includes *Abbey Road* with track one “Come Together.” The *Collected Works of Luciano Pavarotti* includes a video from *Live at the Met* with “Nessun Dorma” from *Turandot*.

Italics as Thought

Italics should only be used when essential to the readers’ understanding of the passage in question and should be kept to the absolute minimum. If the point-of-view is established and the thought has been anchored with pronouns, they are often not needed. Examples:

- I really needed that, Sue thought.
- Sue was relieved. Thank goodness, she thought. I really needed that.

- When word came, Sue was relieved. *I really needed that.*
- Sue ran past the stinking garbage cans. She dove for cover under empty boxes.
Hope they can't smell me now!

Italics are also used in some fiction to indicate communication by telepathy. The standard convention is to treat all such communication as non-dialogue, set in italics. Another convention strictly within science-fiction writing is to use :: instead of quotation marks, and not use italics.

- *Leave without me*, Starhawk insisted. *I can manage on my own.*
- ::Leave without me,:: Starhawk insisted. ::I can manage on my own::

Italics are also used when suggesting the thoughts of another in any type of story:

- They were done for. I looked at Starhawk. *Leave without me*, her eyes seem to say.

Italics as Flashback or “Fragments” in Narration

Italics should be kept to the absolute minimum. Consult a writing guide on how to properly introduce and leave a notable flashback—italics are not used when properly done. For brief flashes of memory, breaks in perception, or divisions of reality and fantasy that intrude in narration, they are sometimes needed for the readers’ clarification. Use sparingly.

- Sue ran past the stinking garbage cans. Her nightmare of the evening before intruded. *Menacing laughter echoed as a hand reached for her throat.* She dove for cover under empty boxes.

EVOLVING WORDS

Email/email: no longer carries a hyphen, and email is capitalized in the same way as any other word.

Web site: The phrase *Web site* is preferred (capitalized as shown), though *website* is now acceptable. The word *Internet* is still capitalized, as is *World Wide Web*.

Other technology words: Continue to hyphenate words such as e-book and e-reader. Music and computer files are not capitalized, e.g. doc, jpg, jpeg, mp3—avoid using them at the start of a sentence. A URL is spoken aloud as “bellabooks-dot-com” in dialogue and written as bellabooks.com in prose (no italics). What’s right today may change tomorrow; *when in doubt, always default to maximum clarity for the reader.*