



Bella Books Manuscript Guidelines

SOFTWARE

All manuscripts should be created and formatted in Microsoft Word. Manuscripts created in other programs should be converted to Microsoft Word prior to submission.

APPEARANCE AND CONTENTS

The manuscript document should be formatted so that it will print on 8-1/2 x 11-inch paper, with at least one-inch wide margins all around. Use Times New Roman in 12-point size set to double-spacing.

Using the software's header feature, number all pages in the manuscript consecutively, beginning to end. The header should also include the author name and title of the book.

The Title Page, page one of your document, should include your name, mailing address, email address and phone number in the upper right hand corner. 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. Center the title and byline in the middle of the title page.

Page two of your document should be the beginning of the story.

After the final page of the story, starting on a new page and for as many pages as necessary, include any acknowledgments, dedications, and "about the author" information.

PLEASE NOTE: You should only submit the manuscript when you believe that it is as error-free and well-crafted as you can possibly make it.

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. Chapters should be numbered sequentially as Chapter One, Chapter Two and so forth. Double-check that there are no duplicated or missing chapters.

One space between sentences and words.

Use a **paragraph or carriage return** only at the end of a paragraph. Let the software automatically wrap the text.

Set **tabs/indents** to move in one-half inch at the beginning of each paragraph. Do not tab more than once or use spaces.

Use extra **blank lines** only if indicating a minor shift in 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 three asterisks 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 in your 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.

Ellipsis points are three-dot style, set closed, with no space before or between dots. There should only be a space after an ellipsis if it ends a non-dialogue sentence.

For narrative, there is a space after the ellipsis and the new sentence is capitalized.

- Unless they found the gold... That would be a nice surprise.

For dialogue when the speaker trails off or repeats, no space after ellipsis. New sentences get capitalized, continuations do not.

- “I never knew it was...her. She’s just so...so reserved.”
- “We went over to the cemetery...Her mother’s buried there.”

Though rarely needed in Bella fiction, if an ellipsis indicates an omission it should be set parenthetically with a space before and after.

- ’Tis but thy name that is my enemy. (...) Romeo, doff thy name (...).

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!”

Single quotation marks are for quotations within double quotation marks.

- “When you said ‘this doesn’t change anything’ I thought you actually meant it.”

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, 911, and the like).

Gun calibers: if referring to a specific weapon, leave the numerals for easier identification.

- Now she had to find her .357 Magnum in the dark.
- “Honey, where’d you put the .38 Special?”

When speaking generically of weapons, your characters can use words instead of numerals if the meaning remains clear.

- “I grabbed my twenty-two from the drawer when I heard the glass break.”

Years are usually best left as numerals so readers can make sense of them faster.

- “Must have been after we moved to Kansas in 1982.”

Dates can often be spelled out.

- “Our anniversary is November fifth,” she admitted, “Guy Fawkes Day.”

Addresses: if common and easily recognizable, leave them in numbers.

- “You seriously live at 221B Baker Street?”

If a sentence becomes unwieldy with numbers, default to maximum clarity. When you or your readers stumble over meaning, something should be changed. This may mean rewriting a passage, reverting to numerals in dialogue, or spelling out numbers in prose. Use your best judgment based on the guidelines here and the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

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:

Blonde in noun usage, to refer to a woman with blond hair.

- The blonde walked away, taking my hopes with her.

Blond in all adjective uses: blond wood, blond hair (on man or woman).

- The blond woman darted into the nearest alley.
- The boy’s blond pompadour, an imitation of his older brother’s, made him seem even younger.

References to time: In keeping with *Chicago Manual of Style*, no hyphens are used, unless needed for spelling out a number. Designators a.m. and p.m. are lowercase, with periods, no space between.

- My appointment is at two thirty.
- The bomb went off at seven fifty-two a.m.

PUNCTUATION MARKS

Dashes (em dashes) should only be used for an interruption or to set off text—like this. In dialogue, when speech is interrupted or cut off, the em dash goes inside the quotation marks.

- “How did you manage—”
- “I just called the—does it really matter how?”

If narrative interrupts the dialogue, the em dashes go outside the quotation marks (that is, if the narrative is the aside)

- “How did you manage”—she gestured at the new car—“this without me knowing?”

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!*

Semicolons: 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, no hyphen:

anti antihero over overprotective bi biannual post postdoctoral co coworker 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

However 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 quotation 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 DVD *Collected Works of Luciano Pavarotti* includes a video from the TV show *Live at the Met* with the solo “Nessun Dorma” from the opera *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 the hounds 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 seemed to come alive. *Menacing laughter echoed as a hand reached for her throat.* She dove for cover under empty boxes.

EVOLVING WORDS

Email/email: no hyphen, whether composing email or checking email. Treat as other common nouns when capitalizing.

Voice mail/voice mail: two words, whether leaving a voice mail or checking voice mail messages. Treat as other common nouns when capitalizing.

website/webpage: website and webpage may be used instead of Web site and Web page. The Internet and World Wide Web are still capitalized when referenced in full, but may be shortened to net and web.

- Just search the Internet.
- Just search the net.
- Her granddaughter told her to use something called the World Wide Web but she had no idea where to start.
- She scoured the web for hours but learned nothing more about the woman from the coffee shop.

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.*

BRAND NAMES/TRADEMARKS/FAMOUS NAMES

Be careful with company names, brand names, trademarks, and other famous names. If used, spell, capitalize, and punctuate them correctly. For a brand or company that refers to itself in all capital letters, we generally capitalize only the first letter.

- LEGO is the spelling the company uses. We would use Lego.
- AT&T remains capitalized since all letters are spoken individually.

NOTES ON FREQUENTLY USED OR MISSPELLED DICTIONARY WORDS

Some of these are mentioned earlier in this document, but are wrong often enough they bear repeating. Default to *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, not a word-processing program.

’til vs. til vs. till: all of these are synonymous with *until*. If you use one of them, use the same variant consistently throughout your manuscript.

uh-huh: always hyphenated

T-shirt vs. tee shirt: use T-shirt, always capital T

coffeepot: one word

trash can: two words

Air-conditioning is a verb or a noun, but hyphenated in either case. **Air-condition** is a verb, hyphenated. **Air conditioner** is a noun, no hyphen. When talking about **air-conditioned space**, **air-conditioned** is an adjective and takes a hyphen for clarity.

rock 'n' roll: note the direction of the single quotation marks, both “closing”

doughnut vs. donut: if this word appears in your manuscript, pick one spelling and be consistent

seat belt is a two-word noun

side by side is an adverb: *sitting side by side*; **side-by-side** is an adjective: *a side-by-side comparison*

face-to-face is an adverb or adjective but hyphenated in both cases

All right, not alright

US / USA vs U.S. / U.S.A.: both of our in-house references have moved to US / USA. Think of keeping consistency with other usages such as EU for European Union and UK for United Kingdom.

Okay always. Never just ok.