

# The SCHOOL MAGAZINE SINCE 1955

## *Do's* and *Don'ts* for Successful Manuscript Submission

We *love* to buy and publish quality writing. Unfortunately, more than 80% of the submissions we receive are seriously below par. Here are some suggestions to help you write and submit a text that is publishable in *The School Magazine*.

### **Before you write**

- Read *contemporary* published works in the genres you intend writing—don't rely on your recollections of childhood reading. Poetry, drama, fiction and non-fiction styles for children have all changed dramatically since the 1960s, reflecting the major socio-cultural changes in Australian life. Even children's first names are very different. Whatever the genre, even if you are writing something that is set well in the past, make sure you're writing for *today's* children, with *today's* understanding of the world.
- Read recent back copies of *The School Magazine's* four titles (*Countdown*, *Blast Off*, *Orbit* and *Touchdown*) so that you only send us material that is suitable in style, theme and length.
- If you are submitting from overseas, make sure that the content and language of your submission has relevance to, and is likely to interest, children living in Australia. Remember, our seasons are those of the southern hemisphere, our flora and fauna are different, we have mums not moms, and our readers are not brought up on Abraham Lincoln.
- Avoid sexist, racist, violent, religious and stereotypical characterisations and behaviours. Strive to capture the diversity and inclusivity that have long been the hallmarks of Australian multiculturalism.
- Remember that our magazines are read in a classroom context, in government, independent and religious schools of various faiths. So avoid characterisations and themes that belittle teachers or education, and avoid expressing values likely to offend readers or their teachers.
- Avoid overdone topics (dogs, cats, moving house, grandparents; poems about birds, the moon ...) unless you bring to them a fresh voice and angle.

- Avoid didacticism—both covert and overt. We do not buy texts that “teach” children about topics, relationships or values.
- If poetry is your genre, think hard about whether rhyming verse is the best form to use. If you decide it is, make absolutely sure you know how to avoid forced rhymes and uneven rhythm.

### **Before you submit**

- Don't submit first drafts. Re-read and revise your work until it's polished and professional.
- If possible, get feedback from someone discerning and disinterested (i.e. not a friend or family member).
- Sit on your manuscript for at least a month before you re-read it and revise it again.

### **Presenting the manuscript**

- Use a standard 12-point font, and double line spacing between paragraphs and 2.5 cm margins on all sides.
- Proofread carefully to avoid errors in punctuation, grammar and spelling. Check your usage against the *Macquarie Dictionary* and the *Style manual for authors, editors and printers* (published by John Wiley). Both texts are available in every public library.
- Make sure you include a header or footer on each page with your name, your email address, the text's title and page number/total pages (“3 of 5”).
- Include a **manuscript cover page** with your name, contact details (including email), text title and *accurate* word count (not “about 1200”).
- Print out your manuscript on a good quality printer and staple or paper clip the pages securely.
- Don't put your submission in a plastic folder or sleeve. It creates unnecessary labour and is environmentally unsound.

### **The cover letter**

- Keep it *very* brief. Simply state the names of the texts and the genre of each (e.g. whether it's poetry, fiction, non-fiction). Don't include details about the content of the texts, and don't tell us that your family/children/creative writing group loved your work.
- Don't include your CV and lists of published works. We evaluate the manuscript—not your past achievements.

- Address your letter to the *current* editor by name. Nothing shows you're out-of-touch more clearly than a letter addressed to an editor who retired three years ago ...
- Please don't share with us that it's been your life-long dream to write for children and/or be published in *The School Magazine*. Be professional, brief and restrained.

### **The notification process**

- Don't send a return envelope or international reply coupons: we no longer return any submissions, and all our correspondence with you is by email only.
- We do not acknowledge receipt of manuscripts: you can assume that if you've addressed your envelope correctly, it's reached us. We will notify you on rejection or acceptance only.
- We receive hundreds of submissions a month, so please do not email the editor to inquire about the progress of your submission—unless you haven't heard from us in over 12 weeks.

### **For more information**

For details about word lengths for each genre, submission procedures and payment rates, download our Submission Guidelines from:

[www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/services/schoolmagazine/contributors/index.htm](http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/services/schoolmagazine/contributors/index.htm)

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