

Glossary of Writing and Publishing Terms

by Debbie Hardy

Acquisitions editor	The person at a publishing house charged with acquiring manuscripts.
Advance	Amount paid up front for a manuscript. This is deducted from future royalties.
Agent	A representative who sells an author's manuscript to publishers. They receive part of your royalties <i>after</i> the book is published. You don't pay them anything up front.
Author	Someone who has written a book, published or not
Draft	A rough, unedited version of a manuscript. There may be many drafts before a book goes to print
Edit	Add, change, or remove words from a manuscript (Usually remove – get used to it)
Elevator Pitch	Brief description of your book. Imagine you get on an elevator with someone who could help publish your book. You have 30 seconds with them until they get off the elevator. What would you say to sell them on your idea?
Fiction	A story from imagination. About 20% of all new books are fiction.
Format	The way a document looks. Standard format is Times New Roman font size 12, double spaced, 1" margins on all sides, ½" indent first line.
Genre	Type of book, like biography, Christian, reference, or romance. This is printed on the back cover so a bookstore owner can tell on what shelf to place the book.
Logline	One or two sentences describing your book, like a TV guide listing
Manuscript or MS	A written document
Marketing	Selling your book online, in person, through bookstores, or any other way
Memoir	Personal story, all true, with no fiction, no made-up conversations or situations
Nonfiction	The sky's the limit!
Novel	A story, usually 80,000 to 100,000 words
Pitch	Sell. When you meet an agent, editor, or publisher, you talk to them about your book and yourself, trying to sell both. If scheduled in advance, this is a pitch session.
Platform	The people you know or can influence; those who will likely buy your book
POV	Point Of View from which a story is told
Proposal	A detailed description of your nonfiction book, including a cover letter, short author bio, synopsis, marketing plan, Table of Contents, and first chapter or two
Publication	A magazine or newspaper, either hard copy or online
Publicist	Someone who gets you publicity, such as radio and TV interviews
Publisher	Someone who publishes your book or article
Query letter	A short letter to an agent or editor to see if they're interested in your work
Rejection	A way of life for a writer. A rejection doesn't say that your writing is bad, only that the person who will love your work is at a different address.
Royalties	Percentage of book purchases paid to authors. Agents also get a percentage of this.
Slush pile	Stack of unsolicited manuscripts on an editor's or publisher's desk, waiting to be read
Synopsis	2-3 paragraphs describing your nonfiction book. Fiction synopsis will be 2-10 pages.
Target audience	The people you anticipate will read your book. Write specifically to them.
WIP	Work In Progress, what you're working on
Word length	The number of words in a manuscript. Publications have a strict word count; books vary from short e-books to 120,000-word novels.