

Synopsis Template

Agents and publishers have their own submission guidelines. Whatever they ask for on their website takes priority over any general advice.

Heading line

Many writers put this information in the query letter instead; the synopsis itself can start straight with the story.

Title

Genre

Word count

If the guidelines ask for it.

Pitch line

One or two sentences

Who wants what, what stands in the way, what is at stake?

The skeleton of the plot

The whole story from beginning to end, in the third person and the present tense, with all the major turns and the resolution. Connect the turning points through cause and effect.

Starting situation

Inciting incident

Major turning points

Climax

Resolution

The main characters

A phrase for each main character: who they are, what they want, what stops them and how they change by the end. A common convention is to put each name in capitals the first time it appears.

Protagonist

Character

Character

Character

The ending and what it means

How the central conflict is resolved

How the protagonist has changed

The query letter

It doesn't give away the ending.

- ☐ What your book is
- ☐ A few paragraphs about the story that make an agent want to read it
- ☐ A line or two about you
- ☐ Why you are approaching this particular agent

Seven steps to a synopsis

- ☐ Read the guidelines: length, format, single or double spacing, attachment or pasted into the email.
- ☐ Write the pitch line first.
- ☐ List the turning points.
- ☐ Tell the story along that skeleton.
- ☐ Reveal the ending.
- ☐ Show the characters through their choices.
- ☐ Cut and test: strike names that appear only once, minor settings and description, then give it to someone who doesn't know your book.