

Pre-submission Query Checklist

Tiffany Yates Martin/FoxPrint Editorial

Are You Ready to Query Literary Agents? A Practical Checklist

Before you send your manuscript to literary agents or publishers, make sure you can check off every point below:

Your First Pages

- My opening pages introduce compelling characters readers can quickly invest in.
- The story establishes meaningful stakes and creates immediate tension.
- The narrative has propulsive forward momentum and raises questions that make readers want to keep reading—while clearly orienting them to the story.
- The point of view is clear and consistent.
- The setting, context, and necessary backstory are woven in without slowing the story.
- My voice feels distinctive, confident, and authentic.

Your Full Manuscript

- The rest of the manuscript delivers on the promise of the opening pages: the story, character journey, tone and voice.
- I've revised the entire book—not just the opening chapters—to the same standard.
- I've addressed the issues I suspected weren't working and can't identify areas of weakness I'm hoping agents won't notice.
- Beta readers, critique partners, or an editor have helped me identify remaining weaknesses (if needed).
- The manuscript is as close to publication-ready as I can make it, and feels competitive to me with books I read.
- The manuscript follows industry-standard formatting.

Your Query Package

- My query letter is polished, professional, and focused on the story.
- My synopsis meets industry expectations.
- I clearly identify the manuscript's genre and word count.
- I describe the plot rather than leading with themes.
- My materials are confident without overselling—or underselling—my work.
- Every part of my submission package has been proofread carefully.

Your Professional Readiness

- If an agent requests the full manuscript tomorrow, I can send it immediately.
- I have at least a basic online presence (website or active social media), if possible.
- I'm involved, at least on some level, in the writing community.
- I'm presenting myself professionally in all interactions.

Your Mindset

- I'm prepared for rejection without letting it derail my writing.
- I'm committed to continuing to write and improve, regardless of the outcome.
- I'm querying because this manuscript is the strongest version I can currently make it—not simply because I'm eager to move on.

If you can check every box, you're probably ready to start querying. If not, the areas left unchecked point to the work that will most strengthen your submission before you hit "Send."

Additional resources

Queries, submissions, and pitches:

- ["How Do You Know If You're Ready to Query?"](#)
- ["How to Write a Query Letter Part 1"](#)
- ["How to Write a Query Letter, Part 2"](#)
- ["How to Talk about Your Writing \(So People Want to Read It\)"](#)
- ["How to Speak as Well as You Write, part 1"](#)
- ["How to Speak as Well as You Write, part 2"](#)
- ["How to Talk to Anyone about Your Writing \(or Anything\)"](#)
- ["Are you Writing Literary Fiction? \(Spoiler: Probably Not\)"](#)

Career Building:

- ["How to Be a Working Writer"](#)
- ["How to Become a Bestseller"](#)
- ["How to Succeed as a Writer: Make a Concrete Plan"](#)
- ["The Happy Harsh Truths of a Writing Career"](#)
- ["How Do You Value Your Creative Work?"](#)
- ["Advocating for Yourself as a Writer"](#)
- ["Creating the Career You Want"](#)

Persevering through Rejection:

- [Handling Rejection \(and What Rejection Letters Mean—and Don't Mean\)](#)
- ["What Rejection Actually Means about Your Writing"](#)
- ["You Can Handle Rejection \(And That's Good Because You'll Have To\)"](#)
- ["High Praise, Big Promises...and Crickets"](#)

Do You Need More Help?

You'll find additional tools for your writing—self-paced online courses, downloadable checklists and guides, “Editing Quick Tips” videos, author interviews, my weekly blog on writing craft and careers, and more—on my website, www.foxprinteditorial.com

***Tiffany Yates Martin** has spent her entire career as an editor in the publishing industry, working with major publishers and New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, and USA Today bestselling and award-winning authors as well as indie and newer writers. She is the founder of FoxPrint Editorial (named one of Writer's Digest's Best Websites for Authors) and author of [Intuitive Editing: A Creative and Practical Guide to Revising Your Writing](#) and her latest, [The Intuitive Author: How to Grow & Sustain a Happier Writing Career](#). She is a regular contributor to writers' outlets like Writer's Digest, Jane Friedman, and Writer Unboxed, and a frequent presenter and keynote speaker for writers' organizations around the country. Under her pen name, Phoebe Fox, she is the author of six novels.*

