



## New Authors Guide

### Elk Lake Publishing, Inc. (ELPI)

#### MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSIONS:

All submissions **must** be formatted in our standard style:

1. Microsoft Word document, Word 2016 or later version (MS 365 is on version 2023).
2. One-inch margins all around.
3. **12-point** Times New Roman font (all headings, subheadings, and text should be formatted in this font). **Do NOT use all capital letters or bold for headings.**
4. Double-spaced (See #7 for detailed instructions).
5. Black ink.
6. Left margin justification, ragged right.
7. **Do NOT use tabs** for indenting paragraphs. Go to icon in format paragraph that allows line spacing (while here, you can indicate 2.0 line spacing), click on line spacing options, click on special (first line) and ensure the default is 0.25". Do not have a line space follow or precede paragraphs.
8. **NOTE: Nonfiction writers: Do NOT use Word's endnotes feature.** Manually insert a superscript number for a note and compile the citations in a separate document or at the end of the manuscript.
9. Chapter headings should be flush left and have initial caps with NO indent. To end a chapter, do NOT press Enter or Return multiple times to get to the next page. Instead, press CTRL + Enter or COMMAND + Return for Mac.
10. For a scene break, after the last sentence before the break, enter three asterisks (\*\*\*)+ return to start next section. Please place flush left. If you get a strange line across the page, press the undo key and the line will be deleted or backspace to get rid of them.
11. Only number the pages through Insert Footer so they can easily be removed prior to publication. Do not insert extra pages, Use a header on each page including your name and the title of your novel. Use Insert Header so it can be easily removed prior to printing.
12. Pictures or diagrams should be submitted separately as 300 dpi JPGs. You may use a notation in the manuscript such as [Insert picture one here].

13. Do **NOT** use any other formatting. If you want numbering or bullets or special type, indicate by using [start bullets here] and [end bullets here].
14. **IMPORTANT:** Check your document prior to submission for any extra spaces, paragraphs, line spaces, etc., by going to File, Options, Display, Show All Formatting Marks. Delete any “extras.” For example, there should be no tab characters in the document or spaces after a sentence ending a paragraph. If you do not do this, your document will have errors in formatting. If you use a Mac, go to Word, Preferences, View, Show All Non-printing Characters.

## **PUNCTUATION:**

1. ELPI uses the serial comma. (Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) 6:19: When a conjunction joins the last two elements in a series of three or more, a comma—known as the serial or series comma or the Oxford comma—should appear before the conjunction.

**Example:** James brought his computer, lunch, and jacket to the conference.

2. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction when the conjunction joins independent clauses (See CMOS 6:22).

**Example:** Susie’s book was published, but she still felt she had much more to learn.

**Example:** John went on a hunting trip last weekend, and he forgot his gun.

3. Limit comma splices (except in very rare instances: “I rose, I ran, I recovered.”) Change to two sentences, add a conjunction, or use a semicolon.

4. ELPI prefers the em dash (—) as opposed to the semicolon in most instances. According to CMOS, no spaces should be added on either side of the em dash.

**Example:** Susie went on a shopping spree—an event she regretted.

**NOTE:** When an em dash is used to indicate interrupted speech, put the dash inside the quotes: “Stop!” He yelled at his son. “If I have to tell you—”

However, when the dialogue is interrupted by an inserted action, the em dash goes outside the quotes: “Come, Coki”—she held out a treat—“come and get your treat!” Ellipses could also have been used in this example. “Come, Coki ...” She held out a treat. “... come and get your treat!”

5. An ellipsis is always a series of three dots. See CMOS 13.53 for the use of punctuation at the end of a sentence, e.g., .... or ...? ELPI prefers no end of sentence punctuation, however. ELPI format is space ... space with no spaces between the dots. “How did you eat that so ... so fast?” The preferred and best solution is to use Word’s insert symbol option.

6. Periods, commas, question marks, and exclamation points always precede closing quotation marks, whether double or single. For the positioning of other marks, see CMOS 6:10.

7. ELPI follows CMOS 6.63 for capitalization with colons. The first word following a colon is lowercase unless (a) the first word after the colon is a proper noun, (b) the colon introduces two or more related sentences, (c) the colon announces a definition, or (d) the colon preceded a speech in dialog or a quotation. ELPI prefers colons not be used except in nonfiction.

8. To form possessives properly, we follow CMOS 7.16-19. If the singular noun ends with -s, add an apostrophe s—the bass’s stripes, Jesus’s robe, General Motors’s mission statement. If the plural ends with s, just add an apostrophe—the Lincolns’ marriage, the Williamses’ house. If the plural doesn’t end with -s, add ’s—the children’s teacher, the oxen’s yoke.

9. Semicolons are used to join two parts of a compound sentence in the absence of a conjunction. ELPI prefers two sentences rather than the use of the semicolon.

**Example:** Howard moved the lamp from his desk; he replaced it with a telephone.

**Preferred:** Howard moved the lamp from his desk. He replaced it with a telephone.

10. When using quotation marks, quoted words, phrases, and sentences run into the text are enclosed in double quotation marks. Single quotation marks enclose quotations within quotations. Double marks are used only when they come at the end of the larger quotation.

**Example:** John said, “I love the advice ‘never a borrower nor a lender be.’”

11. ELPI prefers italics for inner dialog, words used for emphasis, and the *first* instance of a foreign language word.

**Example:** *Heavens! I never expected this.* [she thought] *I didn’t think I’d win!*

**Note:** Descriptors such as “she thought” or “she wondered” or “he silently prayed” are not necessary with the italics.

**Example:** This is *not* the way *I* expected things to end.

12. ELPI uses plural pronouns for gender neutrality.

**Example:** Each person is responsible for their own books.

13. Texting should be indicated with [Start text] followed by [End text] after the text segment.

#### FORMATTING SCRIPTURE:

1. Scripture passages within paragraphs are to be enclosed in quotation marks and **not** italicized. Do not include the Scripture reference inside the quotation marks. If Scripture references are used as a block quote—no italics and no quotation marks.

**Example:** If used as a block quote or a header:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1 NIV)

**Note:** The punctuation goes after the quote.

**Example:** If used within a sentence or paragraph: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1 NIV). The punctuation goes after the reference.

2. When a Scripture passage (e.g., Genesis 1: 1-14) is cited in any given paragraph, succeeding references should be documented with only the verse (v. 10) or verses (vs. 15-18). If the chapter is changed, but not the book, document with chapter and verse (9:6).

3. ELPI prefers Trinity pronouns **NOT** to be capitalized. Do capitalize Son and Father when referring to members of the Trinity. Do **NOT** capitalize who, whose, and whom. Do not capitalize

words like glory, gospel, or heaven. See the *Christian Writer's Manual of Style* (CWMS) for an extensive guide to the capitalization of religious terms.

4. ELPI prefers the New Living Translation (NLT), English Standard Version (ESV), or the New American Standard Bible (NASB) for Scripture quotations, but other versions are allowed. No more than two versions should be used.

### RECOMMENDED STYLE GUIDES:

1. All submissions to ELPI should use the *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMOS) 17th Edition (released in September 2017) and/or *The Christian Writer's Manual of Style* (CWMS) 4th Edition. An online subscription to CMOS is available for \$31.50 (or less depending on number of subscribers) from ELPI.

2. ELPI prefers the *Merriam Webster's online free dictionary* (<https://merriam-webster.com>). Please use this dictionary or CMOS as a reference for hyphenated words and correct spelling. On occasion, the proper spelling or hyphenation is available in the Collegiate version.

3. Writers should have access to Bible software such as Biblesoft or BibleGateway.com.

### COMMON ERRORS:

1. World Wide Web and Scripture(s) are always capitalized (www in a web address is not). Internet is no longer capitalized when used within a sentence.

2. Most “e” material is hyphenated: e-book, e-zine, e-mag. Email (email) is not.

3. Catch your “that” usage. Many times, the word *that* can be omitted (See #4).

4. Be careful using *it*. Construct your sentences so ~~that~~ you can use a synonym for the word *it* is replacing.

**Example:** We went to a celebratory gala last night. ~~The~~ party was fantastic.

**Example:** “It’s a beautiful day, isn’t it? It’s good we came here.” Instead, “What a beautiful day for us to come to the park.”

5. Watch for repeated or pet words. Try not to use the same word more than once in a sentence or paragraph. Avoid adverbs if possible. In descriptions, one good word is better than two or three.

6. Numbers and times of day should be spelled out in most cases. (See CMOS 9.2ff for numbers and CMOS 9.37ff for time.)

**Example:** She went to the doctor at 3:00 for her 7th visit. Note: The “th” on 7th is not superscript.

**Better:** She went to the doctor at three o’clock for her seventh visit. Note: Odd times such as 3:27 are not spelled out.

7. Be careful to show and not tell. Be careful not to include too much minutiae in descriptions, thereby telling and not showing. Resist the urge to explain (RUE).

**Example:** Jane woke up, rolled over to the edge of the bed, stood up, put on her robe, buttoned the buttons, and then went to answer the door.

**Better:** “Just hold on!” Jane shouted. “I hear you!” Muttering to herself that some people were just too inconsiderate of the hour, she threw on her robe as she stomped over to answer the door.

### **GENERAL TIPS:**

When you’ve read your manuscript, checking for errors many times, put the book away for a day or two before you look at your work again.

Read your book aloud—you’ll hear awkward phrases.

Authors should have several beta readers—they’ll pick up on things you’ve missed because you’re too close to the story. ELPI prefers a manuscript be professionally edited before submission.

### **SUGGESTED MANUSCRIPT WORD COUNT\*\*:**

- Contemporary romance: 55,000 to 65,000
- Women’s contemporary fiction: 65,000–75,000
- Romantic suspense: 75,000 to 85,000
- Historical romance: 65,000 to 75,000
- Historical: 75,000 to 90,000
- Thriller, mystery, speculative (non YA): 75,000 to 90,000
- Epics and Sagas: 90,000–100,000
- Nonfiction: 35,000–50,000
- Novella: 17,500–40,000 words
- Novelette: 7,700–17,500 words
- Short Story: Less than 7,500 words

**NOTE: ELPI does NOT publish children’s picture books.**

#### **Chapter Books**

Newly independent readers enjoy these slim books separated into chapters.

Ages: 6–9 or 7–10

Words: 4,000–15,000

Includes some spot art

Plots are more complex

Example: *Clementine* by Sara Pennypacker

#### **Middle Grade Books**

Middle grade books are for grades 3–8—upper elementary and middle school.

Ages: 8–12 or 10–13

Words: 15,000–65,000; most often 45,000

Protagonist age: 10–13

Might include spot art at chapter beginnings

Clean and wholesome text, with a focus on friends, family, and the character's immediate world

Example: *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White

### **Young Adult Books**

Ages: 13–18+

Words: 50,000–85,000; fantasy a bit higher

Protagonist age: 14–19

Reflective characters discover how they fit in the larger world, beyond friends and family

Complex plots that read like adult novels, but with topics that interest teens

Example: *Purple Moon* by Tessa Emily Hall

Thank you to EA Books Publishing for the children's books data.

**\*\*Although these word count guidelines may be exceeded, ELPI prefers them to be as close as possible to the guidelines.**