

## Estimating Manuscript Length

Bear in mind that to say you have a manuscript of fifty pages, doesn't adequately convey its length. It depends on how many characters-per-inch (cpi) it was printed at.

If printed at 10 cpi, there will be about 250 words per page, making the manuscript about 12,500 words; if printed at 12 cpi, there will be about 300 words per page, making the manuscript 15,000 words. A heftier manuscript of 250 pages can mean the difference between 62,500 and 75,000 words.

Even some editors ask "how many pages?" which is always surprising. It matters to the general editor for space- allocation, to the printer for typesetting, and to the publisher for costs. If you don't know the cpi of your printed pages, it's simple to put a ruler to some words and count; 10 cpi and 12 cpi are the accepted norms of presentation. Avoid both over-small and over-large print. (Once you know how many words you're averaging per line, you can multiply the number of lines on a few sample pages to get a fairly accurate word-count.)

Of course, if you're using a word processor, you can get a word-count automatically, but make sure you have the program set to count single-letter words (like "a" and "I"); many come set-up to count only two-letter words and up, but usually have a simple fix you can enter. However, when you put the number of words in the upper right corner of the manuscript, round out the number or specify that it's a computer-count, so they don't think you're too, too compulsive.

It's important to know the length of manuscript wanted by the publication or publisher. Manuscripts that fall too far outside the parameters are easily rejected. It's NOT safe to say, "Oh, well, the editor can always cut it if it's too long." Unless you're major star in the publishing world, editors are more likely to heave a sigh when they note the incorrect length of the submission and heave your manuscript onto the reject-pile.

If you're not sure what a particular serial publication uses, you can do the ruler thing on a printed page. Count a few lines to determine the average number of words per line or column-inch, count the number of column-inches, and do your math.

The editors of local magazines and newspapers are more accessible to writers (not because of distance, but because of narrowed circulation area and subsequently fewer freelance submissions); simply phone to ask what their guidelines are. Most major magazines also will send their guidelines for the price of an SASE.

With manuscript lengths, as with most matters in writing, you must do your homework.

<b>Chart</b>		
	<b>Average # Words</b>	<b>Approx. pages, double-spaced</b>
Short-short story	500-2500	2-10
Short story	2500-5000	10-20
Novelette	7000-25,000	28-100
Novel--paperback	35,000-80,000	140-320
Novel--hard cover	25,000-150,000	100-600
Humor feature	300-800	2-4
Oped	500-1000	2-5
Book review	400-1000	2-5
Newspaper feature	800-3000	4-12
Magazine article	2000-5000	8-20
Nonfiction book	20,000-200,000	80-800
Cookbook	10,000-200,000	40-800
Juvenile picture book	500-1500	(varies)
Juvenile book--mid	3000-25,000	12-100
Young adult book	15,000-80,000	60-320
Poem	2-100 lines (4-16 lines preferred)	1-3
Play: one act	20-30 minutes	20-30 playing time
Play: three act	1 1/2 - 2 hours	90-120 playing time
TV script	1/2 hour	25-40
TV script	1 hour	55-70
Movie scenario	1 1/2 - 2 hours	120-250 playing time
Radio feature copy	15 ds lines = 1 minute 3 min = 2 pages	
Public Service Announcement	45 wds = 20 sec 90 wds = 40 sec	one page; all caps
Speech	250 words = 2 minutes 12-15 pages = 1/2 hour	
Book Proposal	outline/summary;	(varies) sample chapter(s)
Query Letter	200-500	1-2 full pages; single-spaced