

Benefit from a Story Blurb Sheet

Writers know the benefits of signing up for meetings with editors and agents at conferences, and the wise prepare themselves to make the best use of such encounters. A story blurb sheet is a powerful tool to have on hand. I use it as my backup plan when I talk with editors, and it helped me acquire an agent.

The blurb sheet contains teasers about your manuscripts and shows word counts and categories, as well as age levels if your stories are for children. Also, brief author info appears at the bottom of the sheet, which should be one uncluttered, easy-to-read page.

On the sample blurb sheet provided, I've listed some of my published books, but on a real blurb sheet for a meeting with an editor, I would list manuscripts that haven't sold, works-in-progress, or ideas I could complete within a reasonable time. If you list only two or three manuscript titles, you can expand the blurbs to five or six sentences. If your blurbs are short like mine, you can include six to nine manuscripts. You should research the interests and needs of the editor or agent you signed up to meet and the publishing house or agency.

Your meeting may involve a critique of materials you submitted beforehand or you may pitch an idea. If the editor or agent indicates interest in having you submit a rewritten manuscript or in seeing the story you pitched, you've accomplished what you came for. Leave the blurb sheet tucked away.

But if the editor or agent declines to see the rewrite or the story you pitched, that's when you place the sheet on the table and say, "This shows some of my other manuscripts. Would you be interested in any of them?" The editor or agent can quickly read and mark any titles that interest him. If he's interested in more than one title, clarify how you should send them in. Most editors prefer to receive one manuscript submission at a time, while an agent may ask you to send several in together. Have an extra copy of your blurb sheet handy in case he asks to keep a copy.

I used a blurb sheet at a meeting with an agent, who checked off three titles she wanted to see. Based on those three submissions, she offered to represent me, and I signed on with her literary agency.

A blurb sheet does more than merely list what you'd like to sell. It is an advertisement for you as a writer. It proclaims that you are not a one-story wonder. It reveals your productivity and that you are constantly honing your craft.

Jennifer McKerley

Amazing Armadillos. Quirky mammals that can jump three feet straight up in the air. They always give birth to quadruplets and will even share their burrow with a skunk.
Nonfiction, ages 6-9, 900 words

Swamp Monsters: Some are reptile-like and some are half-ape and half-man. Scientists can find no proof, but sightings keep happening.
Nonfiction, ages 9-12, 5000 words

Hydra: The huge imaginary water beast with nine snake heads was called the destroyer of men. Although Hercules killed the monster and buried its immortal head, it later caused his death.
Nonfiction, ages 9-12, 5000 words

Rules of the Net: When Carlos helps the coach, he is the only one who sees his friend Kate foul. Will he tell the truth?
Fiction, ages 4-8, 500 words

There Goes Turtle's Hat: Turtle's hat blows all around the zoo. It finally lands next to a gnu, who gives Turtle a fun solution for his runaway hat.
Fiction, ages 4-8, 500 words

Goblins. These stinky, tricky creatures are most dangerous when they wander about under cover of darkness seeking to harm humans.
Nonfiction, ages 9-12, 5000 words

Jennifer McKerley is the author of 12 children's books and the co-author of
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