

AUGUST 2016 BEHIND THE CURTAIN JOURNAL ENTRY

SEE YOUR WRITING FROM DIFFERENT VANTAGE POINTS

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I **haven't** researched this to see if **I'm** just catching up on what other brilliant writers already know. Let me put that right at the top. **I've** learned an important strategy as I get queries and/or manuscripts ready to submit to editors or agents: *see how the information looks in different formats.*

Most people use a word processing software like Word. The standard format for some reason remains 12 point Times New Roman. You may/should print the work for paper editing. You may/should read the work aloud, forward, backward and sideways. And if **you're** working on a picture book or other illustration-heavy piece, you may/should create **what's** called a story dummy to see how the story works in page spreads.

This is all I did until submitting work to editors or agents electronically seemed to really take off. Some want you to attach a file through a website or email address. Faster but not that different from mailing a paper manuscript.

The game changer for me came when more professionals started asking that cover letters and manuscripts (usually the first pages or chapters) be pasted right into the email body. Words just look and feel different in this format. **It's** easier (for me, at least) to see clunky sentences and weed words that need immediate trimming.

Now I automatically do this before **I'm** ready to submit. Playing with other formats helps, too. I change the font and size (like you would with an eReader). I add stock photos to see what emerges. And I **don't** just read out loud. I imagine **I'm** in front of a class or a group that is about to fall asleep if I **can't** hold their attention.

I'm sure there are other twists to this idea. If **you've** found another helpful approach, please share!

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