Checklist for Formatting a Manuscript

- 1″ margins, double spaced in New Courier 12 or Times New Roman 12 font – only on one side of the page. To ensure a consistent number of lines per page the widow and orphans feature should be turned off.
- Paragraphs should be indented .5 inch with NO BLANK LINE between paragraphs. They should NEVER be indented by spacing in (these have to be removed by the editor) a tab is acceptable although preferred is to go into paragraph formatting and just select first line indent.
- One space between sentences (after a period or punctuation) – do NOT justify the right margin.
- If tracking changes has been used during the preparation process, these should be completely removed and not just "hidden."
- Chapters should begin near the center of the page (line 16 – 8 double spaces). Chapters do not require titles.
- Place a header slug with author's first and last name, a word or two from the title and the page number in the upper right of the page.
- Page numbers must be in the right hand corner of the header or footer area and not in the text itself.
- The cover page on the front should use the title in normal size type centered halfway down the page and doublespace below it your name or byline. Your name, address and contact information in the upper left or lower right. Contact information should include phone number and email address, but SHOULD NOT include social security number.
- Word count (rounded off) should be in the upper right hand corner. Word count for many years was determined by multiplying the industry standard 250 words per page times the number of pages. Most houses now use computer word count.
- A forced scene break (intentional white space) should be indicated by placing # centered on a line of its own.

- Do not include drawings, colored type, fancy fonts, giant size type on the cover, or anything else to make your manuscript stand out – remember the goal is to look professional, not different.
- Italics may be indicated by underlining, although most now will just take them inserted as italics where they go.
- Remember that regardless of what is being submitted the first paragraph or two MUST capture the interest of the reader, editor or agent by raising a question, capturing interest or arousing curiosity to cause them to commit to reading further down into the manuscript.
- Replace passive verbs with active verbs (was, ing verb forms).
- When ready to submit the proposal itself will be single spaced, but the sample chapters should be placed in the proposal retaining their formatting so the editor or agent can insure the manuscript formatting is ready to go.
- Finally, individual places where you wish to submit may have requirements particular to how they wish to receive a submission. Always check submission guidelines usually available on their website and adhere to them religiously.