

8 Steps to Getting an Agent

1. Find a salable idea.
2. Write a proposal or manuscript. The only time to contact agents is when you have something ready to sell.
3. Research potential agents online and off as our handout suggests.
4. Write an irresistible query letter about the why, what, and who of your book: the hook, the book, and the cook. Send it to as many agents as you wish simultaneously, but don't include the list of agents as recipients in an email. If you want to approach thirty agents, write to ten or fifteen at a time. You may receive helpful feedback that will enable you to strengthen your query letter. Get feedback on the letter, and have someone proofread it before you send it. If you're mailing it, include a stamped-self-addressed #10 business envelope (SASE) for a response. If you don't, mention you only expect a response if the agent is interested.
5. Follow the submission guidelines of the agents you contact. The comedian Steven Wright once saw a sign in a restaurant window that said: "Breakfast served at any time." So he ordered French toast during the Renaissance.

Of course you don't want hear back from agents at any time. You want to hear yesterday. But don't call or email to see if your work arrived or when you will get a response. Established agents receive thousands of submissions a year and don't keep a log.

Make a note on your calendar or your copy of your query letter of when the agents' guidelines say you will hear from them and call or email them if you don't. If it's important for you to know that snail mail arrived, send it certified or get a return receipt. If you're mailing your work, and you don't need the material back, include a SASE for a response. If you don't, mention you only expect a response if there's interest.
6. If the agent has a written agreement, read it to make sure you'll feel comfortable signing it, and feel free to ask questions about it.
7. Meet interested agents to test the chemistry for your working marriage. Look at the challenge of finding and keeping an agent as creating and sustaining a marriage that has personal and professional aspects to it.
8. Choose the best agent for you, based on passion, personality, performance, and experience.

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The 4th San Francisco Writing for Change Conference / Changing the World One Book at a Time / September 15, 2012 / www.sfwritingforchange.org / sfwriterscon@aol.com /
The 10th San Francisco Writers Conference / A Celebration of Craft, Commerce & Community / February 14-17, 2013 / www.sfwriters.org / sfwriterscon@aol.com / Mike's blog: [@SFWC](http://sfwriters.info/blog) / www.facebook.com/SanFranciscoWritersConference
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