

Formatting Your Poetry Submission

By *Elizabeth Simson*

First, always follow the guidelines listed in the call for submissions for a particular literary journal, anthology or magazine. A journal's web site is often a good place to find detailed information on submission formats (and some journals prefer that you submit online or via email). The Poet's Market published by Writer's Digest Books lists the submission guidelines for hundreds of literary journals.

Read the guidelines carefully and follow them to the letter. When submitting to contests, for example, you may be instructed not to put your name on your poems. Failing to follow the guidelines will disqualify your entry, so pay close attention!

With that in mind, the following guidelines may help as you prepare your submission.

General Guidelines

- Type your poems using a typewriter or computer.
- Use standard-weight (20 to 24 lb) white copy or printer paper.
- Use at least a 12pt font. Stick with a standard font like Times New Roman, Arial or Verdana.
- Never staple, paper-clip or bind your poems, cover letter.
- ALWAYS include a stamped, self-addressed envelope (business size).
- Proofread carefully. Be professional.
- Never submit by email unless specifically invited to do so.

Poem Format

- Use 1-inch margins. The top margin can be ½ inch.
- Unless the guidelines instruct otherwise (for contests, for example), put your name and contact information on the right-hand side of the page.
- Below your contact information, list the number of lines in your poem.
- Space down at least 4 to 6 lines before beginning the poem.

- Put the title of the poem in ALL CAPS.
- If the poem, continues to a second page, list your name, the poem's title, and page number at the top of the second page.

Sample:

	Elizabeth Simson 123 Main Street Ventura, CA 93003 (805) 555-1212 liz@elizabethsimson.com http://www.elizabethsimson.com 15 lines
MY POEM	
Poem begins here....	

Cover Letter Format

- Type your cover letter using a typewriter or computer.
- Use standard-weight (20 to 24 lb) white copy or printer paper.
- Use at least a 12pt font. Stick with a standard font like Times New Roman, Arial or Verdana.
- Provide all of your contact information first, including your email address and web site address, if you have one.
- Address your poem to the editor, if known, otherwise, you can omit the salutation or use "Editor" or "Poetry Editor".
- List the names of the poems you are enclosing. Other than a short note where it might be appropriate (such as how a poem relates to a submission theme), don't explain the history behind your poems. Let the poems speak for themselves.
- If requested (or unless specifically NOT requested), provide a short (2 to 3 lines) biography listing any publication credits or your involvement in local poetry venues. You might also mention if this is your first submission to their journal.
- I usually also write something specific that shows that I am familiar with the magazine. For example, if I visited the web site and particularly liked a poem, or if a recent issue

had an especially striking cover, I might comment on that. I keep this to one or two brief lines and just try to personable and friendly.

- If any of your poems are simultaneous submissions, you must note that in your cover letter. I usually state something like: "Please note that "My Poem" is a simultaneous submission. I will notify you immediately if it is accepted elsewhere." (In general, unless the magazine encourages it, my own preference is to avoid simultaneously submitting my work.)

Sample Cover Letter:

Elizabeth Simson
123 Main Street
Ventura, CA 93003
(805) 555-1212
liz@elizabethsimson.com
<http://www.elizabethsimson.com>

September 21, 2004

John Doe, Editor
Crab Creek Review
P.O. Box 840
Vashon, WA 98070

Dear Mr. Doe:

Enclosed please find two poetry submissions: "Poem 1," "Poem 2," and "Poem 3."

I recently discovered *Crab Creek Review* online and enjoyed Anne Carroll Fowler's poem so much that I decided to subscribe. The print issue (#12) held even more terrific poems. I especially liked Emily Warren's poem "Annunciate."

My poetry has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *The Curbside Review*, *Earth's Daughters*, *Kalliope*, and *The Comstock Review*. This is my first submission to your journal.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Elizabeth Simson

