Standard Manuscript Formatting: Guidelines for Writers

https://skwriter.com/resources/mechanics-of-writing
https://skwriter.com/resources/mechanics-of-writing/formatting-manuscripts

These guidelines apply primarily to manuscripts for long fiction, short fiction, or articles being submitted to publishers, editors, or manuscript evaluators. They are not the same as the formatting used in a finished, published book, which has its own typography, page layout, and spacing. Occasionally, there might be slight variations on minor points, according to specific publishers or publication styles.

- Margins: 1 inch margins all the way around. Follow a publisher's specific requirements if they differ.
- Line spacing: Double spaced text for fiction and nonfiction book manuscripts submitted for editorial review. Articles and online submissions may differ.
- Alignment: Use left alignment with a ragged right margin. Avoid full justification.
- Font: A legible 12-point font is standard. Times New Roman remains a safe choice; Arial and other readable fonts may be acceptable. Follow the publisher's instructions.
- Paragraph Indent: Use a first-line indent of 0.5 inch set in the paragraph formatting options. Do not use spaces to create indents. Some specific guidelines prefer 0.3 inches for some specific guidelines A 0.5-inch indent is a common default, although 0.3 inches can also work.
- Paragraph Spacing: Do not add extra blank lines between ordinary paragraphs in a double-spaced manuscript. Use a clear scene-break marker or drop down 2 double spaces, if switching scenes or a section break.
- Punctuation:
    - one space goes after end of sentence punctuation.
    - In standard American and Canadian English fiction, commas and periods generally go inside closing quotation marks. (e.g. “The cat is black.”) The punctuation depends on the sentence and the style guide.
- Page Numbers: Number manuscript pages consecutively. The exact treatment of the title page and first text page depends on the publisher's requirements. Generally the page number goes on the upper right hand side. For a long manuscript, the first page after the title page is numbered, starting with number 1. For a short story, the first page is not numbered as other information goes on this page. The second page of the short manuscript should be numbered 2.
- Running Header: left aligned, contains the author’s last name, a slash (/) and then the title of the piece or if the title is long, a keyword from the title, as well as the page number. NB: Running Headers are expected on articles, short stories, novels and nonfiction book

and should appear at the top of every page (except the first one.) e.g. see below and header at the top of this page.

- Electronic submissions: Word documents are commonly requested for editorial work; PDFs may be required for some submissions. Always check the publisher's preferred file format. Send photographs and other images separately when requested.

Basic Submission Methods

Hard Copy/Mailed Submissions:

- Printing submission:
    - Paper: White paper, minimum 20 lb. Do NOT use coloured paper.
    - Single-sided printing remains a sensible choice when requested or when submitting a printed manuscript for review. Electronic submissions have no such requirement.
    - Manuscript pages may be paper clipped or held with an elastic, but it is best to leave them loose in a 9" x 12" envelope. Do NOT staple, bind or otherwise confine pages to folders or manufactured covers. Very large manuscripts may be placed in larger envelopes or boxes.

Electronic Submissions:

Word documents are commonly requested for editorial work; PDFs may be required for some submissions. Always check the publisher's preferred file format. Send photographs and other images separately when requested.

- Attach the manuscript as a Word document or PDF in the email to the publisher (Check their submission guidelines)
- Attach each photograph/visual separately in the email in the format required by the publisher

NOTE: This information and samples on how to do the formatting are available here: https://skwriter.com/resources/mechanics-of-writing