

Tips for Your Article Submission's Cover Letter

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General Advice for Submitting a Piece Electronically

More and more journals are transitioning to a fully electronic web interface, streamlining the submission process. Impersonal as this process is, it's best to stick to the journal's formatting and naming rules for documents. The tips below apply if your chosen journal receives submissions electronically and invites contributors to send an essay to a specified email address.

1. For the subject line, choose either "Submission" or "Submission: Short title of essay." You can also include your name—it will be easier for the editors to find your email in their archive in case they need to refer to it later.
2. Use your essay's short title for the document name if no specifics are provided on the journal's website. The editors will re-name your Word file according to their own filing system anyways.
3. You don't mention your name in the actual Word file you're submitting (check the journal's website for specific rules). You can also check the file properties and erase the author line if your MS Word saves that information—the editors will most likely erase it to ensure anonymity.

Sample 1 (samples adapted from actual submission emails)

Dear KSJ,

I have attached for your consideration an article manuscript entitled "Keats and Shelly Are Having A Picnic." I have conformed, to the best of my ability, to the dictates of the Chicago Manual of Style, and I note that this manuscript is not under review at any other journal. I thank you for your consideration.

Yours,

Billy.

Tips for Improvement (Sample 1)

1. Research the name of the head editor and find out about his/her main job (usually, that person is a professor). Then, address the editor personally, as in "Dear Professor Moskal." Avoid casual greetings even if you have a prior professional relationship with that person.
2. Include the title of your piece **in full** in the first sentence. Then say something like, "I am including an abstract of my piece below" and paste your abstract after the main message. You can also outline your argument in the main paragraph, but that will make it harder for the editors to copy and paste it into their own emails when they ask their readers to vet your piece.
3. Find out what the journal's preferred citation system is and stick to it. If they don't specify it (which is unlikely), consult the latest issue. You don't need to advertise your citation skills in your message.
4. Sign with your full name for gravitas and adhere to basic formatting. For instance, journal editors' eagle eyes would notice the unnecessary period behind Billy's name.
5. Add a few signature lines for quick reference: William Bright, Department of English, Awesome University, willbright@awesome.edu

Sample 2

To the Editor:

Attached, please find my article, "Shelley's and Keats's Differing Eating Habits," which I am submitting for your consideration.

In this essay, I examine Shelley's and Keats's radical revision of Enlightenment food habits based on Deleuzian concepts of bingeing. I argue that Keats, profoundly invested in chewing and other forms of mastication, rethought digestion in terms of repetitive swallowing. I seek to demonstrate that he joined Keats in formulating a discourse of anti-bulimic poetics, especially in their joint, hitherto under-researched, work, "Bon Appetit."

I am a Ph.D. candidate in 1820s Romantic Poetry at Harvard University, and I have a Master's in Rodomontade from Oxford University. I was recently awarded a Bragging Rights Fellowship by Yale University to conduct research in their library's special collections of texts from food history; the attached essay draws from some of the research I conducted during that fellowship.

Thank you,

Amanda Author

Tips for Improvement (Sample 2)

Unless otherwise specified, journal editors are not interested in the contributor's credentials. The author should only send the piece, along with a few lines specifying what the essay is about, unless the journal's website explicitly asks for a brief bio paragraph (it might also look like you are not well acquainted with the journal). Once the reviewers read the piece—whether it will be sent to them depends on its merits, not yours—they have no idea who you are because the journal practices blind review.

Sample 3

Dear Professor Moskal,

I attach for your consideration my essay, "Keats's Glaucoma." My essay's word count, including footnotes, is 5,500 (22 MS pages). I have formatted the essay in Chicago style, as specified on your website.

My focus on Keats's glaucoma is based on my reading of "Eye for an Eye" as a poem designed to show the failure of intellectual vision—not the poet's, but God's. Specifically, I see Keats developing the "blind" ruler Sauron, famous for his big, yellow eye, as a reader responding to God, one who has the acuity to understand the "fellowship of the spectrum," yet denies it afterwards as "too damn dark." In this respect, God emerges as a character who self-actualizes Sauron's inability to see and manifests the crucial experience in a Sartrean lens crafting, which is very transcendent. It results in an intriguing aesthetic performance of an entity that, by its nature, cannot actually see anything.

I look forward to hearing from you. Thank your for your consideration.

Sincerely,

James Retina

Distinguished Ogle Scholar

Bright Eye University

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Tips for Improvement (Sample 3)

This one is pretty good, if still a tad long.