Crystal Publishing Style Guide

1. Submit a Query Letter to plandy@me.com. The letter should include a brief description of your idea and your target audience, an outline of your plot, and a sample of the first chapter.
2. Once your idea is approved and you have finished your novel, find a proofreader in your area. Also run your own spelling and grammar checks (see "General Writing Suggestions" for details). The cleaner your manuscript comes to us, the faster it can be processed.

Formatting requirements:
- All manuscripts must be submitted in Microsoft Word for typesetting.
- Type style will be Times New Roman, 12 point.
- Set margins at one inch.
- Right justify the text.
- Double space.
- The first paragraph abuts the margin; all others are indented.

Punctuation requirements:
- Capitalization
  - Do not capitalize anything other than the first word in a sentence and proper nouns unless you have an acceptable reason or rule.
    - For example, not capitalize terms of endearment or the word "sir" in dialogue.
- Commas
  - Use a comma after all introductory words, phrases, and clauses.
  - Use a comma to separate two adjectives when the order of adjectives is interchangeable.
- Colons and Semicolons
  - A colon (:) is mainly used to introduce a subordinate phrase, word, or clause.
    - Her mouth fell open when she saw what was inside the box: a kitten.
  - A semicolon (;) is used mainly to combine two independent but related clauses and is used in place of a conjunction (i.e. it replaces words such as "and," "but," "or," etc.).
    - Example: I enjoy eating ice cream; chocolate chip cookie dough is my favorite.
    - Do not use a semicolon if you do not understand its usage.
- Dashes
  - Use an em dash (—) when introducing an explanation or an appositive statement in a sentence. They can also be used to indicate dialogue being cut off. An em dash does not have a space on either side.
    - Bill felt alone at the party—and in life—since no one ever talked to him.
    - "Can't you see that I'm—"
      "Don't even talk to me." Sally turned her back on him and walked away.
  - Use an en dash (–) in dates, numerals, and abbreviations. An en dash should not have space on either side.
    - August 6–April 17

- Hyphens
  - Use a hyphen (-) to clarify the relationship between words and to show that certain adjectives do not modify the noun separately.
    - A high-income employee
    - A two-lane road
  - Use a hyphen to combine a word with a second word ending in -ing or -ed when these words together modify a third word.
    - A time-consuming project
    - An open-ended question
  - Do not use a hyphen when the compound phrase follows the noun:
    - The question was open ended.
    - The employee earned a high income.
- Ellipses
  - An ellipsis is a punctuation mark containing three dots (…). It is used to indicate omitted words, hesitation or suspense in dialogue, or thoughts trailing off. Do not insert a space before the ellipsis.
    - "I'm not sure I… I mean… What do you think?"
    - "I…I'm s…so cold," he said, teeth chattering.
    - She wanted to know what he was thinking, but the way he looked at her…
- Series/Lists
  - Insert a comma between the second-to-last and the last item in the series. This is known as the Oxford or serial comma.
    - I like dogs, cats, and birds.
  - When possible, make every item in a list the same part of speech.
    - Incorrect example: Some character qualities I would like to develop are being more humble, charity, and how to tell the truth.
    - Correct example: Some character qualities I would like to develop are humility, charity, and integrity.
    - Incorrect example: He lost his keys, wallet, and couldn't find his phone.
    - Correct example: He lost his keys, wallet, and phone. *OR* He couldn't find his keys, wallet, or phone. *OR* He lost his keys, misplaced his wallet, and couldn't find his phone.
  - When items within a list contain commas, separate individual list items with a semicolon instead of a comma.
    - She was wearing a red, white, and blue dress; a bright orange straw hat; and shiny, green earrings.
- Numbers
  - Spell out whole numbers zero through nine. Use numerals for all numbers higher than 10. Exceptions include dates, addresses, page numbers, percentages, exact sums of money, and millions and billions
    - I ate two slices of pizza.
    - Our conversation lasted for 45 minutes.
    - The bank offered a 1 percent interest rate.
    - The city is home to 6 million people.
  - Time
    - Use numerals, including zeros, when writing out time.

- Her alarm went off at 7:00 a.m. every day.
- At 10:30, the bell rang.
  o Dates
    ▪ Months are spelled out and numerals are used for days and years.
      - Elizabeth was born on September 7, 1533.
      - August 20 – April 6

General writing and submitting suggestions:
- Spelling and grammar checks
  o Do a Microsoft Word Spelling & Grammar check.
    ▪ Before running this check, you may want to turn on the readability statistics. Under "Word Options," click on "Proofing" and check the box "Show Readability Statistics." This will give you a summary of your writing level at the end of each Spelling & Grammar check, including Reading Ease and average Grade Level.
  o Consider running your entire text through Grammarly.com, setting the analysis to NOVEL. Once this is complete, copy and paste your text back into Word and do another Spelling & Grammar check.
  o Read your entire manuscript out loud—this will help you find typos and other errors more easily.
  o Many other spelling and grammar questions can be answered by reviewing the government's OCC Style Manual, found at: (http://www.governmentattic.org/15docs/OCCstyleGuide_2014.pdf) (Note, when the OCC guide contradicts the standards listed in this Crystal Publishing guide, please follow the CP guide)
- Show, don't tell.
  o Don't tell us the protagonist's mom looked annoyed. Show us her annoyance by talking about her pursed lips, the hand on her hip, the wagging finger, or her raised voice.
- Every sentence you write should serve more than one purpose.
  o Don't write a sentence that just describes the scenery; write a sentence that describes the scenery and teaches us something about the character who is viewing it. Or write a sentence that moves the plot forward but also includes some visuals about the surroundings.
- Use adverbs sparingly—especially with dialogue tags.
  o Whenever you have used an adverb, take some time to consider if you might not be able to convey the idea with stronger, more descriptive writing.
- Use caution with italics
  o Internal thoughts should be italicized for stories written in a third-person POV but not a first-person POV.
- Dialogue
  o Do some research on "said-bookisms" and writing effective dialogue tags (for example, http://www.dbjackson-author.com/2012/01/25/writing-tips-said-bookisms-the-obscure-sin-that-can-doom-a-manuscript/ and http://www.fmwriters.com/Visionback/Issue%205/tags.htm)

- o For the most part, "said" and "asked" are the most effective dialogue tags. Other terms such as "whispered" or "shouted" can be used on occasion.
    - ▪ Make sure that whatever additional dialogue tag verb you use can actually be applied to words. For example, you can whisper a word. You cannot, however, laugh or wonder a word.
        - • Incorrect: "I can't believe you got away with that," he laughed
        - • Correct: "I can't believe you got away with that," he said with a chuckle. *OR* "I can't believe you got away with that." He laughed.
    - o Dialogue tags are not necessary after every piece of dialogue. In many cases they can be replaced with sentences of character movement—or be left out entirely when the rhythm of the conversation has been well established.
    - o Remember that people more often use contractions in their speaking than in their writing. Try having a friend or two read the dialogue out loud with you and change whatever feels stilted or unnatural
- • Avoid repetition
- • Consider taking the Meyers-Briggs Personality Test (or any other personality test) for each of your primary and secondary characters. This will help you ensure that each character is a unique individual and that they are not all reflections of the writer's personality.
- • Review https://www.kirkusreviews.com/features/unmaking-white-default/ and http://www.diversitystyleguide.com/ for suggestions on how to deal sensitively and accurately with multicultural and diversity issues.
- • The following are some excellent resources for new writers:
    - o The podcast "Writing Excuses" found at writingexcuses.com
    - o Brandon Sanderson's writing lectures, found on YouTube (first one can be found at https://youtu.be/N4ZDBOc2tX8)