

About Word Count & Page Count

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/about-word-count/>

This entry is part 1 of 7 in the series [Writing Terms](#)

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I often get asked about word count, which is one of those writing technicalities that we just need to stick with because there's no way around it. There are standards to the industry, and they exist because it isn't just the publisher who has certain expectations: we all do.

There are no steadfast definitions that everyone agrees upon worldwide, but here is a solid generalization-list. If you want to know what a certain publisher wants, you need to [read their submission guidelines](#).

That said, there are standards in the industry, and lucky for us they are international standards. This means you can simply write your manuscript using those standards and not worry about making changes and quick-fixes afterward to suit a particular publisher. Here are some basics you must know:

Standard Font: Times New Roman. Always, across all genres and writing styles *except a screenplay* (Courier - thanks for the reminder, Greg!). Times New Roman is what you use for any other kind of manuscript: novel, and children's book.

Standard Font Size: 12. Not more, not less.

Spacing: For any type of story manuscript, it's double-spacing - unless it is a screenplay. Totally different rules there, and a lot of them.

Paper Size: Using the American standard 8.5" x 11" is what you need when submitting to an American publisher. Otherwise, the European standard A4 size is fine (which is slightly longer than the US standard). This can sometimes be a difficulty for writers who work from one culture or language to another - such as children's book translators. (Thanks go to [Corinna](#) for reminding me of this need and sending me to some good resources!)

Here are some helpful resources on dealing with those page conversions:

- Here is a character counter. You paste the text you want counted into the space provided and it will tell you all the ways to count that text (characters with space, characters without space, pages) and you can even dictate to the counter how many lines your page should have, so that you can get an accurate quantity on that page size. www.charcount.com.
- International Paper Sizes: A [comprehensive table](#).
- Interesting [article from Brian Forte](#) about A4 vs. 8.5" x 11" paper sizes.
- For anyone needing to design pages with graphics across various media and media sizes, Apple provides a special program just for dealing with that. It's the [Pages for Mac](#).
- If you're looking for an open source software, check out [Apache Open Office](#). It's completely free and multi-lingual. Plus, you can actually make an impact on future improvements.

How Many Words

Here's a breakdown of the word count your manuscript should have, based on the kind of manuscript. These numbers are based on the Current Industry Standards, which means I am updating this information as needed so that it matches current trends in the market. You can count on this information being checked at least once a year. (This means that the norm 20 years ago or more does isn't reflected on this list. If you want to know about manuscript length for historical reasons, you will need to research that.)

Are there certain expectations for certain genres that are different - beyond the reader's age group? Absolutely. Where that is particularly applicable, I've noted below.

There are always exceptions, but these are the industry norms. Stick to these numbers and you'll be working within the professional and market expectations.

Flash fiction: under 500 words. In some Flash Fiction writing competitions, the rules are extremely strict. For the most generalized definition, we sit squarely at 500 words or less.

Drabble: word count must be *precisely* 100 words, including the title. This is a brain bender for the serious writer.

Article: 500 to 2000 words.

Short story: 500 to 7,500 words.

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Chapbook: 1,200 to 1,600 words.

Chapter Book: [See this article](#).

Early Reader Chapter Book: 1,500 to 4,000 words.

Chapter Books for grades 3-5: 5,000 to 10,000 words.

Middle Grade Novel: 20,000 to 40,000 words.

YA Novel: 50,000 to 80,000 words.

Novel (very generalized): 40,000 words and up.

Romance Novel: 80,000 to 100,000 words.

Fantasy Novel: 90,000 to 120,000 words.

Adventure Novel: 80,000 to 90,000 words.

Novelette: 7,500 to 17,500 words.

Novella: 17,500 to 40,000 words.

Illustrated Storybook: not applicable, really (but a good rule of thumb is to stick to no more than 450 *characters* per page for a traditional storybook with pictures on every page).

If you're working on an illustrated storybook, there are certain factors that inform your word count. Primarily, this is a question of demographic – [who will be reading the story and why](#)? To get ideas, look to books you want to emulate. After that, it's really a question of what the publisher wants. In general, illustrated stories are more about [page count](#) than word count.

Page Count:

These pages counts are based on the American Standard sized paper using the standard manuscript expectations (see above).

Illustrated Storybook: 16 spreads, or 32 pages.

Comic Book: 24 pages of story, filled with ads to be 32 pages total.

Graphic Novel: 60 to 500 pages.

Article: 2 to 8 pages.

Short Story: 2 to 31 pages.

Chapbook: 5 to 7 pages.

Chapter Book: [See this article.](#)

Early Reader Chapter Book: 6 to 17 pages.

Chapter Books for grades 3-5: 21 to 42 pages.

Middle Grade Novel: 83 to 165 pages.

YA Novel: 207 to 330 pages.

Novelette: 31 to 73 pages.

Novella: 72 to 165 pages.

Novel: 165 pages and up.

Romance Novel: 330 to 412 pages.

Fantasy Novel: 370 to 495 pages.

Adventure Novel: 330 to 372 pages.

Screenplay (feature-length film): 85 to 120 pages. (About 90 pages is preferred.)

If you're looking for more specific information, please let me know. I've listed here the information people have asked of me, so it's possible there's something I've overlooked. Either write me a message or leave a comment below. Thanks.

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