

MARY KOLE

EDITORIAL

Picture Book Manuscript Template

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Picture book manuscript formatting doesn't need to be intimidating. First, the basics: Your margins should be 1" all around, indents going out to .5" for each new line for prose, and no indents for rhyme. Use a 12 pt. font like Times New Roman. You can choose to double-space your prose, but avoid that for rhyme. (My examples here are NOT double-spaced in the interest of conserving space.) Check out my dialogue format template for more if you're unsure about your dialogue formatting. You can communicate page turns using parentheticals (indicating page turns is optional, I'll give one example with and one example without). Art notes are also optional, you can read more about them here. The manuscript continues as formatted in the following examples until the end. There's no need to put "The End" or similar.

Here's how you start your manuscript. You can choose to use a header. Good content for the header is your manuscript title, your last name, your word count, and the number of pages. Use your word processing program to automatically insert the number of pages. (You can Google instructional videos that pertain to your specific program.) Page count might be overkill if your picture book manuscript only spans one page. A sample header might look like this:

Manuscript Title / Kole / XYZ Words / Page 1 of X

Then at the top of your first page, you will want your project's logistical information. Below that, add one extra line break, and begin the manuscript.

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Manuscript Title
By Mary Kole
XYZ Words

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Picture Book Manuscript Format: Prose

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Here is a prose manuscript with an art note, with suggested page turns, and without. Look at how both dialogue and narration are handled.

Version One (page turns suggested in parentheses):

(1-2)

Duck walks along the road, only to trip over a rock. “Ouch!” Duck yells.
“What’s wrong?” asks Owl, who is flying by.
“I broke my favorite shoe.”

(3-4)

Duck looks at the rock that tripped him. He’s never seen a rock like this before.
Owl flutters down to take a peek. (*Illo Note*: The rock is actually a turtle.)

(5-6)

“Who dares disturb my slumber?”
Duck and Owl jump back.
“We didn’t mean to surprise you,” Duck says, “but maybe you shouldn’t be sleeping out in the middle of the road...”

(7-8)

“Or in the middle of the day!” adds Owl. “Are you okay?”

Version Two (no page turn suggestions):

Duck walks along the road, only to trip over a rock. “Ouch!” Duck yells.
“What’s wrong?” asks Owl, who is flying by.
“I broke my favorite shoe.”
Duck looks at the rock that tripped him. He’s never seen a rock like this before.
Owl flutters down to take a peek. (*Illo Note*: The rock is actually a turtle.)
“Who dares disturb my slumber?”
Duck and Owl jump back.
“We didn’t mean to surprise you,” Duck says, “but maybe you shouldn’t be sleeping out in the middle of the road...”
“Or in the middle of the day!” adds Owl. “Are you okay?”

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Picture Book Manuscript Format: Rhyme

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Now a rhyming manuscript with an art note, with and without page turns.

Version One (page turns suggested in parentheses):

(1-2)

Duck was blue.
He didn't know what to do.
He'd tripped on the road and broke his shoe.

(3-4)

“Why, what's this?
Something's amiss!” (*Illo Note*: The rock is actually a turtle, who wakes up in surprise.)
“Who dares disturb my bliss?”

(5-6)

Owl swooped down,
Landed on the ground.
“What do we do with this friend we found?”

Version Two (no page turn suggestions, notice stanza spacing instead):

Duck was blue.
He didn't know what to do.
He'd tripped on the road and broke his shoe.

“Why, what's this?
Something's amiss!” (*Illo Note*: The rock is actually a turtle, who wakes up in surprise.)
“Who dares disturb my bliss?”

Owl swooped down,
Landed on the ground.
“What do we do with this friend we found?”

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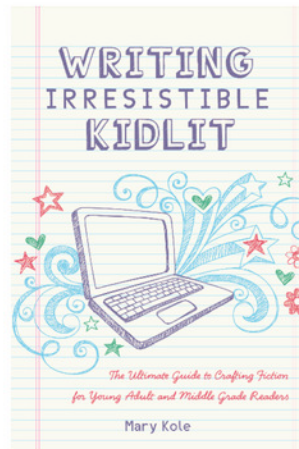
About Mary Kole

Former literary agent Mary Kole provides consulting and [developmental editing services](#) to writers of all categories and genres, working on children's book projects from picture book to young adult, and all kinds of trade market literature, including fantasy, sci-fi, romance and memoir.

She holds an MFA in Creative Writing and has worked at Chronicle Books, the Andrea Brown Literary Agency, and Movable Type Management. She has been blogging at [Kidlit.com](#) since 2009. Her book, [Writing Irresistible Kidlit](#), a writing reference guide for middle grade and young adult writers, is available from Writer's Digest Books.



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"Mary is a masterful speaker, very engaging, and I loved the intimate, casual format. I'm sure I'll revisit the webinar many times in the future." – Wendy H.

I give monthly free and paid webinars online on writing topics like queries, character writing, picture books, and novel first pages. The paid webinars include a personalized critique of your work. Please check out upcoming [Webinars and Events](#). I'm also available to Skype into your writer's group about these topics or speak at writing conferences.

If you enjoyed this handout, consider hiring me for editorial services, sharing on social media, or passing this material along to your writing and critique groups. Enjoy, and I wish you the very best of luck with your writing and publishing endeavors!

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