

GELLER MEDIA MANAGEMENT, INC.
OUTLINE FOR A NONFICTION BOOK PROPOSAL

A book proposal can be viewed as a sales tool to demonstrate to an overworked editor that your book idea is a must-have for his or her list. It must present an engaging idea and distinguish itself from other books currently available. The proposal's form can change to suit the subject. Following is an outline for elements that should be addressed in your proposal.

Your book proposal should be engaging, readable, and reflective of the book you describe. It should provoke a positive and progressive response from an editor: "This is an interesting idea... Not bad... This may be a book... This is going to be a **big** book--I hope no one else has seen this proposal!"

Formatting: The proposal should be **double-spaced** with a standard 12 pt. font and 1-inch margins on all sides.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

This section of the proposal can range from approximately three to 20 pages. Use subheadings unless the overview is extremely short. The purpose is to get an editor's attention and never let it flag. The overview should include:

- **Subject matter** of your book and its relevance
- **Editorial approach** and style of the author (critical, analytical, geared to a popular audience)
- **Market/Audience:** Who was in the author's mind when s/he wrote the book? Who will most likely buy this book?
- **Promotion/Publicity:** How will the consumer find out about the book? What resources/connections does the author have to help promote the book (professional affiliations, media contacts, reading/book signing venues, etc.)?
- **Size up the competition:** Are there similar books in the marketplace? What distinguishes your book from other books currently available? (Perform an online search on bn.com or amazon.com to research titles. Online retailers often have a larger selection of titles. Then go to a library or bookstore to research those books. Read the books that are very similar to your book idea so that you can articulate how your book is better or different.)
- **Length** of the book (in approximate number of words). For specialty books, i.e., photography or illustrated books, note the number of photo and/or illustrations (distinguish color from b&w).

- **Table of contents** (one pages) with chapter titles and subheadings if needed.

As you write this section, include at the beginning a one-sentence description that summarizes your book and how it is different from all others. ("The only social history of women in higher education written for a general trade audience.") Be sure to mention the strongest points early on (i.e., this subject addresses a key issue of our society for the first time; the author is a well-known expert in this field; or the American Association of Child Psychologists has already committed to endorsing the book and is purchasing 8,000 copies for its annual meeting.) If there is a compelling and engaging story involved, the proposal should begin with that.

Note: Do not include budgets or mention financial resources required to complete the book project.

CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER OUTLINES

Include chapter titles and a short paragraph summarizing the contents of each chapter. Narrative descriptions are always preferred over bullets or outline format. The chapter summary should convey a clear impression that the book is completely thought out. An editor does understand that the chapter outline may change with the actual writing of the book.

AUTHOR BIO

Stress your qualifications and why you are the right person to write and promote this book. Note publications (articles and books), accomplishments and awards in your field, and other areas that support your expertise (conducting national/regional workshops on the subject). This section should be written in the third person and should not be longer than half a page. Do not attach your C.V. or resumé.

INTRODUCTION AND SAMPLE CHAPTER(S)

The sample chapter is the most important element of the book proposal. Even though your proposal may be well-written and well-conceived, it all comes down to the writing. Editors want to know that an author can write a strong narrative. Include the introduction and the most interesting chapter(s) in the book.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Attach any relevant materials: published articles, news coverage (print or video), or photos w/captions for illustrated books that will help educate the editor and support the need/interest for your book.