

The Dos and Don'ts of a Synopsis

By Josi S. Kilpack

* A condensed, narrative, concluding summary of a novel

DO—

- 1) Single space one page synopsis.
- 2) Double space multiple pages.
- 3) Begin with main character and main conflict.
- 4) Write in present tense.
- 5) Write in third person.
- 6) Use the same name when referencing a character.
- 7) Weave conflict as it happens in the story.
- 8) Keep flow easy to follow.
- 9) Transition between paragraphs.
- 10) Present a clear view of what characters care about.
- 11) Present a clear view of what's at stake for the heroes.
- 12) Present a clear view of what the heroes stand to lose.
- 13) Make synopsis fully conclusive.
- 14) Include pertinent info in the upper left-hand corner:

Title here (in italics)

Genre here—novel word count here

Synopsis Word count here

Author's name here

Don't—

- 1) Single space your synopsis unless it is one page or less.
- 2) Flush paragraphs—always indent the first line.
- 3) Space between paragraphs.
- 4) Use a cover page.
- 5) Use any fancy headings, fonts or font sizes. (12 point New Times Roman only)
- 6) Leave out any conflict that moves the story forward.
- 7) Leave out any characters that have an important role.
- 8) Include minor events of your story that don't move story.
- 9) Forget to proofread and edit.
- 10) Write the synopsis as if you were a character.

Tips and Tricks:

*Include a 'hook' in the first paragraph.

*One or two paragraphs per chapter makes a "Chapter Outline."

*Condense your "Chapter Outline" to create your synopsis.

*Follow the submission guidelines EXACTLY for each editor/agent you submit to.

Your Synopsis is Your Sales Pitch—Polish it!