

# Necromancer Games Submission Guidelines

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**S**o you want to write for **Necromancer Games**? We welcome the opportunity to publish adventures by both new and established authors. Looking to break into adventure writing? This is your chance. These guidelines are meant to assist you in submitting your module for publication.

Before we get started, there are a few important things to keep in mind: First, all submitted material *must* be your own work and may not be copied, in whole or in part, from any published or copyrighted source. By submitting a module to **Necromancer Games** for publication you are agreeing that all content submitted is your own original creation and that you have the legal right to sell the content to us or create the content for us without restriction. Also, though no form is required to accompany your submission, if accepted, you will be required to enter into a contractual agreement with **Necromancer Games**. So that means we can't take submissions from minors. Finally, we ask that you only submit your module or proposal to **Necromancer Games**. If you submit to other companies at the same time it disqualifies your submission. If you have questions about any of these requirements, please contact Clark Peterson at [clark@necromancergames.com](mailto:clark@necromancergames.com).

OK, now that the preliminary stuff is out of the way, here is the information you need:

## What We Are Looking For

We are looking for submissions from both published and unpublished authors. Published authors are allowed to send in proposals for products. Unpublished authors must submit completed first drafts.

We are looking for adventure modules that will, when completed, run a minimum of 48 pages in length when printed, with a preferred size of 96 pages. We operate off a rule of thumb of 750 words to the printed page. We want adventures. Dungeons. Towns. Wilderness. Whatever. Since all our products are designed to be dropped into existing campaigns, your adventure should be set in a generic fantasy setting, just like you would submit to *Dungeon* magazine. In fact, you may want to consult their submission guidelines for more information. We want pure, high fantasy, swords and sorcery stuff. It must be d20 only. No submissions for other game systems.

Our core concept is the "mini-campaign." This means that the adventure should be of such a scope that a DM can run a series of adventures based on the source material, allowing the PCs to gain 4 to 6 levels of experience. Most "mini-campaigns" include a wilderness area and several areas of adventure. There should be an overarching plot but it should be flexible to allow a DM to expand or detail at his or her discretion. Again, the location should be "insular" in that it can be easily dropped into any existing campaign. An outstanding example of



our “mini-campaign” concept is the ENnie Award Nominated 96-page adventure *Hall of the Rainbow Mage* or the upcoming *Vault of Larin Karr*. Refer to these products to see what we are talking about.

We **do not** want products that are world books or extended supplements. We do not want compilations of rule variants or prestige classes. Of course, you can feel free to invent items or monsters or spells (or even slight rule variants and prestige classes) and make them a part of the adventure, but that should not be the focus of the book. And we are definitely not looking to publish a new spell system.

### **First Edition Feel**

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Most importantly, our modules are aimed at having “First Edition Feel.” After all, our logo says “Third Edition Rules, First Edition Feel.” It is hard to define what “First Edition Feel” is, and we are sure that you as an author either “get it” or you don’t. But just to help you along, here is a list we posted awhile ago in an interview for RolePlay News:

“First Edition Feel” is the cover of the old **DMG** with the City of Brass; it is Judge’s Guild; it is Type IV demons not Tanaari and Baatezu; it is the *Vault of the Drow* not Drizzt Do’Uurden; it is the *Tomb of Horrors* not the *Ruins of Myth Drannor*; it is mind flayers not Ilithids; it is Tolkien, Moorcock, Howard and Leiber, not Edgings, Hickman, Jordan and Salvatore (as much as we may enjoy the latter); it is definitely Orcus and the demon-princes and not the Blood War; it is Mordenkainen not Elminster; and it is Artifacts and Relics from the old **DMG** (with all the cool descriptions). Basically, if Gygax wrote it, it is “First Edition” in our mind. If it makes you think of the Forgotten Realms or Dragonlance then you are *way* are off track.

If you are a newer player, you should get your hands on some of the classic TSR modules: *Tomb of Horrors*, *Hall of the Fire Giant King*, *Descent into the Depths of the Earth*, *Vault of the Drow*, *White Plume Mountain*, *Village of Homlet*, *Keep on the Borderlands* or *Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth*, or some of the old Judges Guild modules such as *Caverns of Thracia* or *Treasure Vaults of Lindoran*. These modules, and some others not listed, defined “First Edition Feel” and you may want to refer to them for inspiration.

We don’t want to imply that all we are looking for is a hack and slash adventure. While we believe strongly that epic fantasy roleplaying requires dangerous situations and combat, we also know that great adventures need good NPCs and solid story elements. Check out *The Crucible of Freya* (or even our free adventure *The Wizard’s Amulet*). You will see well fleshed-out NPCs with back stories. You will see combat, but also the chance for roleplaying. Make sure your submission includes these elements. You might note that even *Rappan Athuk*, an old fashioned dungeon crawl, has well-detailed NPCs and monsters.

### **How To Send In Your Submission**

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All right. You believe you have a great module and you think it has that “First Edition Feel” we are looking for. How do you go about sending in the submission? Easy.

Send an email to [clark@necromancergames.com](mailto:clark@necromancergames.com). Make sure to put “module submission” in the title line of the email so we can review it promptly.

There are different rules depending on if you are a published or unpublished author.



## **Published Author Submissions:**

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If you are a published author we accept module or product proposals. By “published author” we mean publication in a print product by an acknowledged source. PDFs or articles in fanzines don’t count. Necromancer Games reserves the right to request persons representing themselves to be published authors to follow the guidelines for unpublished authors in Necromancer’s sole discretion. Send an email to the address above, and include the following:

1. A **Short Treatment** of the proposed module, detailing the working title, setting, plot (original and compelling), characters, NPCs, the level of characters for which the module was meant, a summary of the rewards to be gained and foes to be overcome and an estimate of the completed module’s length and number of maps.

This treatment is key to us deciding if we like your module “idea” so sell us on that here. You should also include in this treatment a summary of why you believe the module you are submitting has “First Edition Feel.”

2. Then we want you to **Fully Detail One or Two Encounters and One Principal NPC** from the proposed module. You will probably want to pick up a copy of a *Dungeon* magazine to see the appropriate format (or check their web site for their submission guidelines which include the proper format). This is where you sell us on your skills as a writer and an adventure designer. We like combat, so be creative. And don’t be afraid to make it deadly. We strive to be very complete in our descriptions of encounters for our readers, so don’t skimp on the “Tactics” information.

**Note:** If you already have a more complete manuscript prepared (more than just one or

two encounters and an NPC) go ahead and send that, but please do the treatment as detailed in item 1 above.

3. Also in the email include your **Full Name, Mailing Address, Primary Email Address** and phone number (optional) where you can be reached.

4. List your prior publication experience.

5. Lastly, we do not allow you to submit your proposal to other companies while it is being considered by **Necromancer Games**. Please include a statement that your submission is not being sent to any other companies.

You should save the contents of the submission in Microsoft Word (PC) format or Rich Text Format (RTF) and attach it to the email.

## **Unpublished Author Submissions:**

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You should follow all the guidelines for published authors, above, with the following differences: Instead of the encounters and NPCs in #2, above, you must send a full first draft. Remember we use a rule of thumb of 750 words per page and we want a manuscript of at least 48 printed pages, preferably 96 pages. And of course you won’t have anything to put for #4 (until we publish you, that is!).

## **Tips For Submissions**

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Here are a few extra submission guidelines:

1. Please do your best to present the submission in a professional manner, well edited and proofed. You pros out there already know this, but for any “newbies” we can’t stress enough that “neatness counts.” We will be making decisions based both on the content you present and on how you



present the content. Believe me, you can tell a lot about an author by their submissions. Think of this as a job interview in a sense.

2. We don't mind dark or edgy submissions, but please avoid profanity, unnecessary nudity, criminal violence, rape, drug use, etc. Think PG-13 with an R here or there. No NC-17 and no X.

3. Make sure you are using Open Game Content. Throw away your books and rely on the System Reference Document (if you don't know what that is you have some research to do before you can be a freelancer). You cannot use material from supplements or books that are not a part of the System Reference Document or otherwise Open Content.

4. You cannot refer to the title of the rulebooks or to page numbers in the rule books. Instead you must use abbreviations (*PHB*, *DMG*, *MM*) and sections (such as "See Hazards in the *DMG*").

5. Include full monster stat blocks. We will decide if we are going to cut them or shorten them.

6. When in doubt about how to do something or how to format something, refer to the submission guidelines for *Dungeon* magazine for guidance.

7. Please use Times Roman font (or Times New Roman) for your submission in 12 point. Do not use "fancy" or artistic fonts. Do not include graphics or graphic elements. We have an art and layout department that will handle all that. All it does is make a submission hard to read.

8. Use single space with a blank line between paragraphs in your manuscript.

9. Use only one space after a sentence.

10. Avoid "passive voice." Without getting into a grammar lecture, here are two good rule of thumb:

- a. Get rid of the word "will." Don't tell us what "will" happen, make it more active and tell us what happens. For example, don't say "If the players enter the room, the orcs will attack." Instead, say "The orcs attack anyone entering the room."
- b. Beware of constructions with "to be," which tends to sound like minutes from a meeting. For example, this is bad: "Passive voice is to be avoided." Instead, try: "Avoid passive voice."

11. Use "DM" not "GM".

12. Italicize magic items and spell names.

13. When listing magic items, make sure to put the bonus first, as in "+1 longsword" not "longsword +1."

14. Playtest, playtest, playtest!

### **A Note About Art and Maps**

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Don't worry about art and maps. If your proposal is accepted, we will ask you to prepare the module you proposed to us. In that process you will be asked to submit a list of art you think might be helpful to the module. You will be required to send us sketch maps so that we can understand the module. All art and maps will be created or redone by professional artists.

### **The Necromancer Games World**

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Though our products are set in a generic fantasy setting, there are some locations that have been alluded to in our previously released products, such as Bard's Gate,





Reme and Fairhill. Please do not tie your adventure into any preset location. We want each adventure to be a discreet adventure. We may later decide to place it near an established setting but you should not worry about that. What ever you do, **DO NOT** set your adventure in the Scarred Lands from **Sword and Sorcery Studio**. They handle contracting adventures for their setting.

### **How We Judge Your Submission**

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Don't you hate it when you are asked to do something and aren't told how you are being judged? We want to be as up front as possible. We will judge your submissions and proposals based both on content and professionalism. First and foremost, we are looking for an awesome module with great content and "First Edition Feel." It has to have both. Great feel but a lame module is just as bad as a great module with no "First Edition Feel." Let's put it this way: the best Spelljammer adventure ever written would never get published by **Necromancer Games**. That isn't to say it isn't a good adventure. That just isn't what we do. Just like the cheesy rip off of *Tomb of Horrors* won't get published either.

Second, we are looking at professionalism. Did you follow the directions set forth above? Were you neat or sloppy? Well organized or frazzled? When we look at your submission we have to decide if you as a writer can be depended on to follow through on what you say you will do. A professional submission is a better indicator that the writer is going to be reliable. You are creating a first impression. Don't waste it.

### **What We Do and What You Get**

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If we like your submission, you'll receive a reply requesting a full adventure (or if you

sent a full adventure, we will send a contract). We may also make suggestions to help your adventure be more successful and ask you to make those changes and re-submit your adventure.

Any module purchased and published by **Necromancer Games** becomes the sole property of **Necromancer Games, Inc.** This policy has no exceptions. We do not offer royalties. All work is done "for hire." We pay a flat fee. Payments are made at a basic rate of 2 cents per word (published authors may make slightly more), with payment coming after the first billing quarter following release of the work. You are not paid for maps since they are all redrawn by professional artists. In addition to monetary payment, we send you six free copies of the module containing your published work. You also get author credit right on the cover of the module as well as inside on the "Credits" page. That's right, the cover of the module would say: "by [you]" right on the cover. How cool is that? The writer's contract will spell out all the details.

Please do not contact us daily asking about the status of your submission. We will try our best to promptly review everything that is submitted. But there are only a few of us. Plus, we have to see how your proposal fits into our business plan. And that may take a while.

### **Some Good Tips from *Dungeon Magazine* Submission Guidelines**

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The encounters in an adventure should relate directly to the adventuring goal. Encounters that are interconnected and critical to the adventure's plot are best. Illogical adventure set-ups in which monsters and treasures are randomly thrown together should be avoided. This does not mean one cannot use random encounter tables, but



the tables should be logical and consistent with the adventuring environment, making the overall adventure sensible and believable.

Indoor complexes laid out in perfect symmetry are dull; use creativity, even if the final result isn't perfect architecture. Avoid using large mazes.

Situations in your module that violate established game rules should be handled carefully. Game rules should not be altered without extremely good reasons. Other alterations, such as new monsters and treasures, are permissible but should not be overused. You may also add new material that expands on the rules, such as optional combat rules or details on adventuring in unusual environments.

A good adventure includes encounters that challenge both the players and the characters. Furthermore, the adventure should test the various classes and skills in the party so that no player character feels excluded or superfluous. An adventure that contains nothing but combat encounters is not as interesting or well balanced as one that combines combat encounters, traps, puzzles, and roleplaying opportunities.

Consider ways to surprise players with each encounter: cunning ways to use monsters and traps, clever methods to conceal treasure, and so forth. When devising encounters, consider giving PCs multiple ways to succeed. Not all encounters can be won with swords and *fireballs*, not every monster “fights to the death,” and not every trap or puzzle has but one solution.

Don't over-reward players or under-challenge them. We will reject modules in which mighty fortresses are guarded by weak monsters, or in which the PCs can walk off with half the miscellaneous magic


items in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Take the time to make rewards consistent and believable as well as balanced. (Note that the *DMG* provides rules for determining how much treasure is appropriate for any given encounter.) Non-monetary rewards (such as a lord's gratitude or small plot of land) are equally favorable. Do not create opponents that would totally overwhelm a party.

We are willing to look at any innovative ideas that involve changes in a module's structure and so forth. Such innovations should not, however, interfere with the playability of the module or the gamers' enjoyment.

Modules that present new magic items, monsters, weapons, or prestige classes are not as interesting as modules that present fast-paced, exciting, enjoyable adventures. If you create something new for the game (such as a new magic item used by an important NPC), make sure its presence in the module is justified, that it is fully explained in terms of its effects in the game, and that it is reasonable and fits with the game rules. Feel free to tweak existing items by giving them unusual properties, such as a *ring of invisibility* that nullifies the wearer's ability to speak or cast spells.

Site-based adventures are generally preferable to event-based ones. Unlike event-based scenarios, which tend to rely on rigid timelines, site-based scenarios are based around interesting locations that characters can explore for one or more sessions: for example, dungeons, castles, strongholds, catacombs, ancient ruins, or cities. Adventures that present fantastic locations filled with diverse, well-thought-out encounters are ideal. For more information on designing site-based adventures, consult the *DMG*.





Action is fun. Action is good. Promote action. Make the players want to take action. Don't coerce characters to act; when you do, you create a split between what the players want (to go on the adventure) and what the PCs want (not to go on the adventure). Start with action. A typical gaming group has several minutes to an hour of "preparation" at the start of a session. Once the adventure is underway, the dice should start rolling (at least figuratively) very soon.

Conclude with action. Let the actions of the PCs (not the actions of NPCs) resolve the adventure.

Reward action. Players would usually rather act than think. Build encounters that reward the players for taking the initiative. (This doesn't mean that the PCs should always win when they stumble through an adventure. A fight is rewarding to the players even if it's a big drain for the PCs.) Thinking is OK too. Some encounters should reward (or even require) thought. A good balance is an encounter that PCs can handle by brute force or that they can handle more easily with some good tactics.

Be careful about traps. If you sprinkle in traps randomly, the smart PC response is to take every room or area slowly and cautiously. That might be smart, but it's boring. Some hint that the characters are entering a trapped area helps the players slow down and be cautious when they need to without slowing the whole game to a crawl.

Remember that the PCs are the protagonists and central figures of the adventure. Do not use NPCs to help the player characters excessively. NPCs who step in and eliminate all opposition to the PCs, lead the PC party, and accomplish the PCs' goals for them are very dangerous to campaigns. Set up the adventure to challenge the PCs,

and let them make it on their own.

If you have any questions, please email us directly ([clark@necromancergames.com](mailto:clark@necromancergames.com)).

I look forward to your submissions.

***Clark Peterson***

President

**Necromancer Games**

