

OPENING PAGES

The First Five Pages Audit

The query makes a promise. The opening pages have to feel like the same book.

READ AS A STRANGER

Print the pages or change the font. Read without explaining anything to yourself. Mark YES only when the page itself earns the answer.

THE PROMISE

- ☐ The first page introduces a person, pressure, or meaningful change, not only atmosphere.
- ☐ The reader can tell whose experience anchors the scene.
- ☐ The opening suggests what kind of book this will be.
- ☐ The voice is specific enough that another writer could not have written the same page.
- ☐ The setting contains at least one concrete, lived-in detail.
- ☐ Exposition appears because the present scene needs it.
- ☐ The protagonist wants, avoids, fears, hides, or decides something visible.
- ☐ The first five pages create at least one unanswered question worth carrying forward.
- ☐ The scene changes by the end of page five.
- ☐ The final line of the sample pulls the reader into the next beat.

THE ALIGNMENT TEST

Circle the strongest promise in your query. Underline the sentence in the first five pages that fulfills it. If you cannot find one, the package is misaligned.

REPAIR

Where the Pages Lose Pressure

Do not polish everything. Find the earliest place the reader's attention weakens.

THE FIRST PLACE I FELT CONFUSED

THE FIRST PLACE I FELT DISTANT FROM THE CHARACTER

THE FIRST PLACE THE STORY STOPPED MOVING

THE INFORMATION I AM GIVING BEFORE THE READER NEEDS IT

ONE REVISION DECISION

The single change that would create the most pressure, clarity, or attachment in these pages is:
