Novel Classifications & Word Counts Cheat Sheet

Genre / Classification	Key Characteristics	Typical Audience	Common Word Count Range
Flash Fiction	Ultra-short stories, very focused	General	Under 1,000 words
Short Stories	Brief narratives, often for magazines	General	Up to 7,500 words
Novelettes	Longer than short stories, shorter than novellas	General	7,501 – 20,000 words
Novellas	Focused stories, often character-driven	General	20,000 – 40,000 words
Novel	Full-length book with developed plot & characters	Teens & Adults	40,000 – 99,000 words
Epic	Large-scale, complex stories, often with subplots	Adults	100,000+ words
Children's Books	Age-appropriate stories, from picture books to MG	Ages 3 – 12	1,000 – 55,000 words
Young Adult (YA)	Coming-of-age, teen protagonists	Teens & Adults	50,000 – 80,000 words
Action/Adventure	Fast-paced, exciting, often with danger	Adults	70,000 – 100,000 words
Erotica	Explicit romance and sexual content	Adults	50,000 – 90,000 words
Fantasy	Magic, mythical worlds	Teens & Adults	100,000 – 150,000 words
Historical	Set in real historical periods	Adults	70,000 – 120,000 words
Horror	Scary, suspenseful, often violent	Adults	60,000 – 90,000 words
Literary Fiction	Focus on style, tone, and theme	Adults, Academics	Varies widely
Mystery	Crime, puzzles, suspense	Adults	60,000 – 80,000 words
Paranormal	Supernatural elements like ghosts, telekinesis	Adults	60,000 – 100,000 words
Romance	Love stories with emotional arcs	Adults	70,000 – 90,000 words
Science Fiction	Futuristic tech, space, alternative realities	Teens & Adults	90,000 – 150,000 words
Thrillers	Suspenseful, high tension, psychological conflict	Adults	70,000 – 100,000 words
Westerns	Cowboys, frontier life	Adults	70,000 – 100,000 words
Vampire (Subgenre)	Vampire-centered stories across genres	Teens & Adults	Varies
Popular/ Mainstream	Fast-paced, plot-driven stories	Wide Audience	Varies

Tips for Using This Cheat Sheet

- Word counts are **guidelines**, not rules — always check specific publisher or market requirements.

- Subgenres can shift word count expectations (e.g., a Paranormal Romance might have different standards than straight Horror).

- When querying, be sure to **label your manuscript's genre clearly** and provide word count upfront.

- Use this as a quick reference when planning your next project or editing your manuscript for submission.