

Submit, Publish, Repeat

**How to Publish Your
Creative Writing in
Literary Journals**

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*Updated
for
2022*

S u b m i t

P u b l i s h

R e p e a t

How to Publish
Your Creative Writing
in Literary Journals

7th Edition

Emily Harstone

Authors Publish

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Introduction

In my experience, one of the best ways to become an established author is not by sending out hundreds of query letters to agents and independent publishers. Instead, all of my professors in graduate school—including famous authors and poets—became established the same way: by publishing their work in literary journals.

Some of them found their agents this way, others their publishers. Many built up credibility by publishing work in literary journals before starting to query agents. This did not happen overnight. For most of them it took years, but it ultimately led to book contracts, book publication, and stable teaching jobs.

A literary journal is a magazine that specializes in publishing works of literary merit. Some focus on a particular genre, like science fiction or crime writing, and others publish poetry, short stories, or flash fiction. Most are open to literary work of all kinds. Many are open to visual art, as well.

There are well over 5,000 literary journals that are being published at this time. Some are printed publications that have one to twelve issues a year; others are electronic publications. In the years since

Submit Publish Repeat was first published, electronic publications have become even more commonplace and print journals have become rarer. Some literary journals have both print and electronic versions. You can read most online journals for free, and many print journals have some sample pieces online, so you can see what kind of work they publish.

Literary journals are published all around the world. There are respected journals published in English which are based out of Singapore, Nigeria, India, and many other countries. Most are open to work by authors of any nationality, although some journals focus on publishing regional work.

Many literary journals are associated with an academic institution; most universities have at least one literary journal they produce. Many of these journals are well respected. A quick way to spot a respected journal is to see when it started. Some journals have been around for well over one hundred years. Of course, that doesn't mean a relatively new journal cannot be well respected. There are several that started a few years ago and have gained a formidable reputation.

The majority of literary journals do not pay their writers. This is because many are registered as non-profits or are run by an

individual or a small group of individuals as a passion project, not a way to make money. It is also because most online sites that publish literary journals have no ads, and thus no way to raise money, since reading the journal is free.

Most literary journals are labors of love. Most non-academic literary journals are edited by writers, and the little funding they have generally comes directly out of the editor's pocket. Academic and established journals occasionally pay their editors, but the majority work for free, volunteering their time.

There are still hundreds of journals that do pay writers, usually between \$10 and \$75 for poems and short stories. One of the following chapters features journals that pay for work. In addition, most print magazines will give you a complimentary copy of the journal your work appeared in.

Some literary journals that pay raise the money to pay through charging writers to submit. Even though we really support paying authors, we ultimately have an even bigger issue with charging writers to submit (more on this in Chapter 16).

In this book, I will tell you why you should submit to literary journals. I will also provide advice on how to find reputable

journals, how to submit to them, and all the other practical details involved in submitting.

My work has been published in well over one hundred reputable journals, as well as in many anthologies, some of which you can find in major bookstores. My poetry has been translated and published in over fourteen countries.

I have also submitted for others professionally, placing many poems in prestigious journals for other people.

The first university I was hired to teach at chose to employ me based on my publication record, as at that point I had no experience teaching at the university level. My publication history has also helped me find publishers for my longer manuscripts.

Submitting and being published by literary journals has helped improve my writing life in so many ways. That is one of the reasons I always encourage others to get their work out there.

Right from the start, the focus of Authors Publish was to make submitting to literary journals more accessible, but it wasn't until I wrote the first edition of this book, that it really took off.

Since then, different editions this book have been taught all over North America in college classes, shared by MFA programs, and writer's groups. It's been downloaded for free over 72,000 times, and helped many writers launch their careers.

It is important to note that all the information here is up to date at the time of publication. However, literary journals open and close or change their submission policies all the time, so make sure you verify information before submitting to any of the journals mentioned here.

The information that pertains directly to submitting in *Submit, Publish, Repeat* has remained consistent, over the past six editions of the book. Although each time I update the book to include more details about certain parts of the process.

Among other updates, this edition of the book includes new markets, new ways to find journals, and additional details in terms of why you should be actively submitting.

Chapter 1: Why You Should Submit to Literary Journals

When I was first starting out as a writer, I had no desire to submit to literary journals. I did not really understand what function they served and didn't know how many there were out there. I thought they were a small, niche marketplace.

By the time I entered graduate school, I had been published a few times. Most of the works were in journals where I knew the editor and my work was solicited. This sounds nice and easy, but it is less rewarding if you know the person in charge of a publication. You always wonder if they chose your work just because they knew you.

When I entered graduate school, I discovered very quickly why having your work published in literary journals was important, regardless of what genre you wrote in. It was a stamp of approval, a way of making it clear that you were not a novice. It also made it easier to publish work in the future.

Establish a track record

The first reason that you should start submitting to journals is that agents and publishers are more likely to sign a contract with an author who has a track record. I wrote many query letters before I submitted to journals, and my author's bio was always depressingly empty.

Once I published my work in literary journals, I started to get the attention of agents and publishers in a way I hadn't before. I could pick and choose from various publications to put in my bio. Some of the anthologies that accepted my work had been published by major presses (including Knopf), so including this information in my bio and cover letter was certainly helpful.

Novice writers often complain to me about the expectations agents and publishers have for pre-existing publications. They tell me how complicated it makes getting the first book published. I always encourage them to submit short stories and excerpts of their novels to journals for publication, because that way they can have a solid stepping-stone toward getting their first book published.

Attract agents and publishers

The second reason you should submit to journals is that it can actually attract agents to you, or create a direct connection with a publisher. I know several fiction and non-fiction writers who have received queries from agents after getting their piece published in a prestigious journal.

For example, Heather Smith Meloche's short story was published by the literary journal *Hunger Mountain*. An established agent read that issue of *Hunger Mountain* and signed Meloche. The agent ended up placing her debut novel, *Ripple*, at Penguin Putnam.

Agents and publishers only tend to read the most respected journals. Placing your work in a smaller journal won't help an agent or publisher find you, but it will still help you create a publication history that makes you more appealing to a more established journal, as well as publishers and agents.

In addition, some journals—like *Wildness* which is published by Pelican Press —have a manuscript press attached to the journal. These manuscript presses almost always end up publishing authors whose work has appeared in their journal first.

The more you publish, the more you will publish

The third reason that you should submit to journals is—as a general rule—the more you are published, the easier it is to get more work published.

When I submit my work to a respected journal, I am no longer a poet without publications, but one who has appeared in many prestigious journals. I don't know if that alters the editor's opinion, but it probably encourages them to examine my work more closely. A higher proportion of my work gets accepted every year, in increasingly prestigious journals.

Also (and this has happened on several occasions), when one of my poems is published in a literary journal, an editor of another literary journal will read it and then solicit a direct submission to their journal. This almost always results in publication.

Building a relationship with journals helps support your career

Another reason to submit is that once a journal publishes your work, you have a connection with them. This can really help when you publish a book, or chapbook. The first chapbook of mine that was published had very few sales, and the second did much better, not because it was a better book, but because at that point I'd built

up a past publication list of literary journals that had published my work. Well over half supported the chapbook.

For some of them, this just involved posting a social media update with a link, for others it meant writing a review of the book. Some journals even send out monthly updates of what past contributors are up to now.

My relationship to journals has also led to other opportunities, such as participating in podcasts and readings. Also, many journals nominate for prizes, and my work has been nominated for many awards over the years including The Pushcart Prize, and Best of the Net. All of these things help my query letter stand out.

Share your work, gain readership

One of the great motivations to submit, at least personally, is that you can share your work with others by publishing in literary journals. When your work is published in a literary journal—particularly an online one—it is easy for both friends and strangers to read your work. Because I have published widely, I have been able to establish a small but important base of readers and supporters of my work.

Some were complete strangers who stumbled across my work and then looked me up online and wrote me an email. Others were acquaintances who read a piece of mine in an online literary journal (that I linked to on my Facebook page) and then made sure to buy my longer publications.

It is important to remember that publishers are not the whole picture. Even if the ideal publisher accepts your manuscript, just publishing is not enough. Reaching readers and hearing responses from them can be a rewarding part of writing, and with literary journals, you do not have to publish your first book in order to get feedback from strangers and friends.

Be seen with the greats

Another reason to submit is that some journals publish famous writers along with new and upcoming ones. In this way, this space is democratic like no other, and offers a chance to be in the same space as a cult author, or a very established author—maybe one whose writing you admire and enjoy.

This is a great opportunity to be published in the same journal as, say, Haruki Murakami, or Sharon Olds were published in. It is also fabulous to see your name along with the more established authors

in the industry, and a good way to get noticed in the literary community. I did a happy dance the first time my work appeared alongside Neil Gaiman's.

Chapter 2: How to Know Your Work is Ready to Submit

Most writers struggle with the question of whether their work is ready to submit. They write something and for a brief moment, feel it is the best thing they have ever written—then change their minds. Even after many edits, they are not always sure if something is ready. Perhaps you do not do this. If you are someone who is always sure that your work is ready for public consumption, you can skip this chapter.

I am a person who is prone to self-doubt, and rarely do I feel like a piece is ever truly done. However, I have a set of guidelines that helps me know when I am ready to submit it. Having the following guidelines in place helps me always have something to submit.

Make sure the piece is at least two weeks old

When I first write a poem or short piece of prose, I tend not to have any idea if it is good or not. I lack perspective on it. I like to take at least two weeks off before editing it—giving it space and time really helps.

Get another person's perspective

This step is not always possible for me anymore; I write and submit so often that it is hard to find someone to give me detailed feedback for all my poems. At least the first few times you submit, it is important to have someone look over the work.

If you are just looking for typos, anyone will do. However, if you want more feedback than that—and honestly, you probably should have it—look for someone whose opinion you trust, or for a writing group.

Many independent bookstores and libraries house writing groups. Writing groups are terrific, because you get feedback from a variety of people all at one time.

Know yourself

Most people make the same minor grammatical or spelling errors over and over again. Most writers also tend to overuse a favorite word or phrase.

If you know what mistakes you tend to make in terms of spelling and grammar, you can be on guard for these. For example, I have a tendency to add more commas than are needed.

In terms of words, I sometimes use the word “lull” too often. If you know these sort of things about your own writing, you can avoid falling into any obvious traps.

Avoid beginners' mistakes

Beginning prose writers do not usually pay enough attention to paragraph breaks. Chapter 10 talks in a more in-depth way about some of the other mistakes new submitters make repeatedly.

There are a lot more potential traps to catch beginning poets than prose writers—Chapter 11 is devoted to those poetry-specific traps.

Edit

Make sure that everything you submit to journals is edited. This may seem obvious but unfortunately it is not. Some people submit their first drafts to literary journals. This usually ends in rejection, but if the piece is accepted with mistakes and the mistakes are published, this reflects poorly on the author. Make sure to edit both for mistakes and for content. The App [ProWritingAid](#) can be very helpful, but there is a cost attached to it. The Web version of the [Hemingway App](#) is free, and works fairly well.

Don't procrastinate

Sometimes it is hard to take that final step and submit, even if you have edited a piece a half-dozen times or more. Don't fall into that trap, even if you are a perfectionist. Start submitting after you have completed the above steps. Even if it is not perfect in your own

eyes, it could well be for someone else. After all, writers are often their own worst critics.

Focus on the beginning

First impressions are important. If the first three paragraphs of your short story are bland, confusing, or riddled with errors, chances are that the editor or reader will either not read your entire piece, or not read it as carefully.

With a poem or a piece of flash fiction, you only have a few lines to win over the reader or editor.

Make sure your beginning is memorable, polished, and clear. It greatly increases the odds that your piece will be published.

Make sure you have a memorable title

Many writers don't think the title of a short story or poem is very important, but it is the very first impression you make on many readers and editors. This is particularly important for poetry and flash fiction because there are fewer words involved in both these forms of writing, so more attention is placed on every word.

When I was reading for a literary journal, three people coincidentally submitted poems titled “Tabula Rasa,” which means a clean slate. As interesting as that phrase is, the whole group of readers passed on all three poems, partially because the title in

every case felt like an easy choice and did not actually suit the poem. It felt too generic.

Also, while we were discussing all three poems, it was very hard to distinguish one from the other, without physically pointing.

A memorable title can help intrigue an editor. It can also help them remember your piece and find it again in the pile of submissions.

Chapter 3: The Basics of Submitting

It is very easy to submit your work to literary journals. In the past, you had to submit work through the mail with a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) and it could take months or even years to hear back from the journal. Some journals still require you to submit by mail, but it is very rare.

Most submissions are now electronic and because of that, turnaround times are much faster, although there are exceptions.

There are two primary ways to submit electronically. The first is through email. This used to be the most common way to submit. You can use your existing email address or create an account that you use exclusively for submitting—whichever is your personal preference. It is good to figure out which works better for you.

When you submit via email, some journals prefer the work to be attached and others prefer the work to be in the body of the email. Either way, it is easy to submit via email, and rather fast.

Submission managers, largely run by third-party services, are becoming even more common. I would say that all of the most prestigious journals now use these. Submission managers are easy to use sites that organize the information for the editors as well as writers, to an extent.

By far the most popular submission manager is Submittable (formerly Submishmash). Submittable charges the journals that use it, but not the submitting writers. It is easy and free to set up an account. You can even connect it to a pre-existing Facebook account.

Submittable saves your address and contact information, and makes it easy to insert your cover letter and upload your work. It also allows for easy withdrawals of work from some journals if your piece is accepted elsewhere, and tracks your submissions for you.

On your personal user submission page, your work is listed as received (if the literary journal has the submission but hasn't opened it yet), in-progress (once they open the submission or assign an editor to it), and then accepted or rejected. You receive an automatic email from Submittable when a journal receives your piece and also when they accept or reject it.

There is no notification when the journal opens it (and the submission status switches from received to in-progress), but you can log into Submittible at any time to check on that.

The downside to Submittible is that while it is free for writers to use, the company that runs it charges literary journals. Because of this, many journals have started to charge submission fees (a topic I have devoted an entire chapter to), and Submittible makes it very easy for journals to charge submitters a fee.

They recently added a feature that is rather confusing. Journals can now add a donation button or a subscription option at the bottom of the submit page. These options are presented under the heading “Payment”. The issue with this is that paying for these things is entirely optional, but that might not be clear at first.

I worry that writers new to submitting or even just new to Submittible could be buying subscriptions or donating not because they want to, but because they think they have to, in order to submit.

Outside of Submittable, there are other smaller submission managers, but for all of these, you have to sign up on an individual basis. All of them are easy to use.

Most journals ask for a cover letter, a brief biographical statement, and the work itself. I go into the details of the cover letter and the biographical statement in the next chapter.

It is important to note that your cover letter should be brief and to the point. It should not be longer than three sentences in length, unless the journal specifically requests additional information.

Unless the journal explicitly asks you not to, always include a cover letter. Even if it is bland and innocuous, it is rude and unprofessional to not include one.

At the end of the cover letter, after your name, it is a good idea to include a brief biographical statement. Most biographical statements should be fifty words in length or less. This statement is always written in third person.

All journals have specific guidelines. Some are rather detailed in terms of formatting, inclusion of contact information in a

particular way, the kind of font to use, and the like. However, most guidelines are simple and easy to follow.

If the preferred font is not explicitly stated, use Times New Romans, size 12. Prose should always be double-spaced, but poetry should be single-spaced.

Always make sure you read the submission guidelines before you submit, which are there for a reason. Not following them will at least make it harder for your piece to get accepted, or, in some cases, will get your writing deleted unread. When you are submitting via email, for example, most journals have a specific subject line format they want you to use, to make sure that your work is not filtered out of their inbox.

Once you have submitted your work, all you have to do is update your submission tracker (more on that in the next chapter). Submitting really is easy and once you have submitted a few times and know how to find good journals, you can be much more efficient with your submissions.

Chapter 4: Seven Tips for Submitting Your Work

If you have never sent your creative writing out to a literary journal before, the experience can be intimidating. Many productive writers avoid submitting. However, there is no real way around it if you want to get your work out into the world.

This chapter contains six tips for submitting your work. Even if you have sent out work before, you may find them helpful. I have been submitting for ten years now and these tips are still a touchstone for me. They always help me keep on track.

Set a submission goal for yourself

Set it at a number that seems reasonable to you—perhaps five submissions to different magazines per month. I often exceed my per-month goal, because once I reach that point, I want the feeling of accomplishment to linger. Soon those submissions will really start to add up.

The more experience you have submitting, the faster you will get; as you progress, it becomes easier to submit your work. I often

have forty submissions out at a time. Three of the most respected authors I know suggested that this was one of the ways that they became successful. I don't know why forty is the magic number for me, but it seems to be the case.

Create submission packets

If you are a short story writer you don't need to do this, since most journals only consider one short story at a time. Some publishers of flash fiction (fiction under 1,000 words in length) allow authors to submit up to three stories at a time.

However, if you are a poet, journals generally want three to five of your poems to consider at a time. I have five packets that each contain between four and five poems.

I always reserve one packet to submit to a journal that does not accept simultaneous submissions (work that is submitted to other journals at the same time). It is becoming more common for journals to accept simultaneous submissions, though. I would say less than five percent of journals don't accept simultaneous submissions. The rest of the packets, I submit to multiple places at the same time.

I go into more details about how packets work and what goes into constructing them in Chapter 5. If you are a writer of flash fiction, much of the information in that chapter also pertains to flash fiction.

Keep track of what you submit and where

I keep a Word document that tracks which journals I have submitted to, what poems I have submitted to them, and when.

I write down which poems have been accepted and where. I document which journals have rejected certain poems. I update this “submission tracker” every time I submit; otherwise, I might send the same poems to the same journal twice, or submit poems that have been accepted elsewhere, or any similar minor disaster.

Make sure you regularly update this document, or it will get out of control. I have included a sample of a very small submission tracker.

Sample submission tracker:

Pending:

The New Yorker, Submitted September 28th, The Living (short story).

The Adroit Review, Submitted September 28th, My Teeth, Superman, Pumpkin Bread (poems).

Acceptances:

Neon, Submitted January 14th, Ham, Companion, Uma Thurman (poems).

Conium Review, Submitted January 25th, Ready (short story).

Rejections:

Threepenny Review, Submitted January 7, 2012. Timer (short story).

The Book Review, submitted January 7, Pancakes for Dinner (short story).

You can also use an Excel spreadsheet to track submissions and if you have a Duotrope subscription, there is a built-in submission tracker that is fairly intuitive to use. Electronic trackers are not for everyone, though. A friend of mine does all her tracking in a grading book.

Submittable also has a built-in tracking system. It previously only tracked submissions you made using Submittable, but there is now a way to manually update it to include submissions you made via email or other submission managers.

Just make sure you are consistent. At first, tracking doesn't seem that essential, but over time it becomes more and more important.

If you don't track submissions, you could end up accidentally sending the same piece to the same publication repeatedly, which will get you remembered by the editors for the wrong reasons.

More importantly, when you are simultaneously submitting, if a piece gets accepted in one place, you have to withdraw it from all the other places it is out at. If you don't do that, it can reflect poorly on you and even lead to a journal not considering your work in the future.

Create a couple of biographical statements

When you read submission guidelines—which vary from site to site—almost all of them will require that you include a brief biographical statement and a cover letter. Most submission guidelines are quite similar, so as long as you have a biographical statement and a cover letter on standby, it should take you very little time to submit.

One of your biographical statements should be under fifty words and the other should be under one hundred words in length.

Biographical statements should always be in third person.

Once your work has been published in various literary journals, you should include some of the most recent or prestigious journals in your biographical statement. However, you should not include all of them; that would just be overwhelming and would come off as unprofessional. Below are examples of biographical statements of less than fifty words. One contains journal names, one does not.

Sample bio 1:

Maria Smith resides in the rural Pacific Northwest. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in numerous places, including: *The Paris Review*, *The Liner*, *Echolocation*, and the anthology *Tidelines*. Her second chapbook, *Pancakes for Dinner*, is forthcoming in 2017 from Hawthorne Press.

Sample bio 2:

Joshua Thomas is a poet, editor, and recovering New Yorker who now lives in Idaho. Joshua once wrote a sonnet every hour for twenty-four hours straight. He loves to hike, cook, and read.

Create a standard cover letter for all the journals you are submitting to

A cover letter should be as simple as possible; an editor does not have a lot of time and does not want to be bogged down by the details. If I am submitting to a journal I particularly like, I will include a note about why I like their journal. Sometimes journals will request that I include additional information such as titles and word count in my cover letter and I will cut and paste that information in. Otherwise, my cover letter is almost identical to the sample letter.

Sample cover letter:

Dear Editors,

The following poems are for your consideration.

Thank you for your time,

Katharine Hathaway

Always read the submission guidelines

Now this might seem like common sense, but many writers figure if they have read one submission guideline, they have read them all. This is not the case. For many literary journals, up to fifteen percent of the work they receive is rejected

because it is not what they publish, and not due to stylistic preferences.

For example, a literary journal that explicitly states they do not accept genre work will receive a fair amount of science fiction short stories. Or a journal that publishes poetry may receive hundreds of short story submissions a month.

Krishan Coupland, the editor of *Neon*, phrased it well when he said, “*Neon* publishes dark slipstream and magical realist fiction and poetry. A 600-page hard-boiled noir detective novel isn't likely to find a place in its pages. Neither is a feature-length documentary film, or any number of hobby articles or fashion pieces. And yet these are all things that I've been offered in the past year.”

You can read Krishan Coupland's full article, “6 Cover Letter Mistakes That Can Ruin the Chance of Publication,” [here](#).

Also, many people who don't read the submission guidelines will end up being automatically rejected, either by a filter on the email the editor has set up, or by the editor themselves because the submitter has not followed one guideline or another.

For example, if the journal's guidelines say they only accept submissions where the work is cut and pasted into the body of

the email, and you send that work as an attachment, they will likely reject your work without ever reading it. That might sound callous, but many editors read hundreds of submissions every month, and they set up their submission guidelines in a certain way for a reason.

For emailed submissions, the subject line guidelines (if there are any) are particularly important to follow because many email accounts are set up so that they automatically filter out your email if the subject heading is incorrect.

Always read a few of the sample pieces (if possible)

In submission guidelines journals often offer unhelpful suggestions like “only submit your best work” or use vague terms to describe what they are seeking.

The best and often only way to get a feel for what a journal will actually publish is by reading at least one of the pieces they’ve previously published. This is easy for poetry and flash, but more time consuming for short stories and creative nonfiction. It is still very much worth your time.

Almost all journals have at least one sample piece online, even if the bulk of what they produce is in print. The sole exception is brand new journals that haven't published anything yet.

Chapter 5: How to Submit Your Poetry for Publication

If you're ready to get your poetry published in literary journals, then you will need to go through the process of submitting your work. This chapter will guide you through the most important step in the process so that you can start submitting your work and get published.

That step is putting together your submission so that it has the best chance of getting the editor's attention, and being accepted for publication.

When you submit short stories or nonfiction to a journal, it can be fairly straightforward: you just choose one well-edited story that you wrote and submit it. With poetry, things are a little tougher because you have to choose three to five poems to submit. There are several things you have to do before you submit them.

Some of this information also applies to flash fiction (fiction under 1,000 words in length). Many journals accept submissions of up to three pieces of flash at a time. Many flash authors have to make

packets as well. So even though I use the word *poem*, much of the information that follows is equally applicable to flash.

Selecting poems for packets

The first step is to choose three to five poems that go together. Some journals accept six and some only accept three. I usually gather the poems in groups of three to five, because accepting six is rare and it's easy to shave a packet of five poems down to three for one journal.

I call each grouping of three to five poems a “submission packet.” I usually have between five to seven submission packets ready to submit, and each packet contains three to five different poems. I submit each of these packets to more than one place at a time, but usually to no more than eight places at one time. That way if the poems get accepted, I can easily withdraw them from consideration at the other publications.

The components of a good packet

When choosing which poems to place in which submission packet, I consider the tone. For example, say I have a number of darkly comic poems; I may group these together in a submission packet.

However, there should be variation in each submission packet. Don't make the mistake of grouping poems that all have the same tone, theme, and subject matter. The editor who reads these poems only gets one impression of your work, and if it doesn't match with what they are looking for, too bad for you.

Having variation in your packet significantly increases the likelihood of the editor connecting with one of your poems. Still, think about order and sense of narration as well—one poem should not contradict or clash with the next. After you have chosen a group of poems, go over them one last time, reviewing for any obvious mistakes or changes in spacing during the rearranging process.

Some poets often have an urge to over-explain the context of their poems in the cover letter when they submit their work to a journal. Restrain yourself from doing that. Most editors won't publish work unless the context is made clear within the poems themselves.

Choosing where to submit packets

I do try to create one to two packets of my best poems and submit these packets to just top-tier journals, ones with really low

acceptance rates. If I submitted these packets to top-tier journals and ones with higher acceptance rates at the same time, the odds go up of the poems in the packet being accepted by a lesser journal before the more prestigious one had time to consider it. Prestigious journals tend to have a slower response time because they generally have a team of editors who have to read everything, instead of just one person.

Once you have your submission packets ready, your poems should be ready to submit to any journal. Don't edit or reorder the packets for every journal; just make sure that the way your poems are formatted fits the journals' guidelines.

I also read a few sample poems on the website before submitting a particular packet.

General considerations

Some journals require your name and contact information to be on every page. Other journals prohibit this and will discard any packet that includes the author's name or personal information. Make sure your packet is formatted correctly for the specific journal.

Once you have a couple of submission packets, it is easy to submit your work. Often, it will take me no longer than ten minutes to submit my poems to a journal I am interested in.

After I submit a piece of work, I immediately update my submission tracker so it is up to date.

Chapter 6: Print versus Online Journals

Print journals have been around for a long time; you can submit to journals that are going into their sixth decade and have published many famous poets, both dead and alive. Online journals are clearly a newer phenomenon, though a number of established print journals have now shifted to online only.

There are advantages and disadvantages that are associated with both forms of publishing. Below, I will offer my personal opinion.

I am going to add that when *Submit Publish Repeat* first came out five years ago, there were hundreds of more print publications than there are now. Electronic journals are more common now than ever. It would be difficult in this day and age to only submit to print journals if you were regularly sending out work.

Print journals

The advantage to being published in print journals is that they are generally more established, and can really help your overall reputation as a writer.

Many of the most established and respected journals are print journals. When the first edition of this book was published around four years ago, all but one of the most respected journals were in print. That is no longer the case. This will continue to shift over time. Now, there are a number of online journals that are highly respected, and publication in them can change the course of your career.

Now, many print journals offer some or all of their content available online as well, often for free, so even if your work is published in the print journal, most people might actually read your work online.

With print publication you often receive a free contributor's copy, so you get to see your work in print. Usually these print journals are nicely bound with an artistic cover. If a journal is well made, receiving it in the mail is a great experience. It can go on a shelf with all your other printed work, giving you an occasional ego boost. Print journals are also more likely to pay, although they do this mostly through free contributor copies or subscriptions to the journal.

Print journals that do not offer free contributor copies are usually not worth submitting to, in my experience.

The disadvantage to print journals is that fewer people read your work (unless they post it online as well). Some journals do have a very large circulation and a large group of consistent readers, but most do not. Many print journals cite rising costs and a decreasing list of subscribers as the reasons they now charge writers to submit their work.

Most of the time, the only place you can buy the literary journal or subscribe is through the journal's website, which means few people are just going to stumble across it.

In all my years of publishing, only once has someone (who is not my parent) bought a literary journal where my work appeared.

People generally seem more open to reading poems for free online than seeking them out in print or subscribing to journals. In part this is because of the cost, but the hassle of filling out payment information every single time you subscribe to a new journal is a factor, too.

All the feedback I have received from readers that I didn't know was for poems that were published online.

Once, *The New Yorker*—a magazine with an excellent circulation, which pays their poets very well—published a poem I loved by a new author. Initially it was only in their print magazine, and they did not post it online. I loved the poem so much that a month later I tracked the author down by looking him up on Google and sent him an email thanking him for the poem. He told me that I was the only stranger to contact him after the publication of this poem.

Another mark against print journals is that sometimes you have to pay in order to read a copy of the print journal that your work is in, and sometimes there is not even a discount for contributors. I think it is wrong that the writer should have to pay to see their own work in print.

A very rare but very real issue with print journals is that occasionally the magazine has advertisements in the journal. Now, if the advertisement is just in the back or front of the literary journal, that is fine; I have no problem with it. Occasionally they will place the advertisements on the same pages as the printed work.

Once, a serious poem of mine was published with an advertisement for a sexual counselor printed on the same page, right after the poem ended.

Print journals often have slower response times. Sometimes it will take over a year to hear if your work has been accepted or rejected. It can also take up to a year after that for the journal to be printed.

Additionally, as I touched on before, print journals are more likely to charge readers a fee in order to consider their work. I will talk more about reading fees in Chapter 15.

Online journals

There are many advantages of online journals. Sometimes they have a large established group of readers who read the journal regularly.

Since works don't tend to be hidden behind a paywall, there are a lot of great poems that people can access for free. It is also easy to share poems published online with friends and acquaintances, because you can link to those through Facebook, Twitter, or email.

Online journals can have audio and visual options that are not as easy for print journals to offer. They also tend to respond to your submission a lot faster, and often it is posted online within months. You don't have to wait years to see your work out in the world.

Of course, publishing in online journals also has its disadvantages. Most online journals are not taken as seriously as print journals, but this is changing. Particularly within the last year, online journals have become more respected. This is mostly due to the fact that they tend to have a larger and more vocal group of readers.

Once a piece is printed online, you have fewer options open to you in terms of getting a journal to reprint it. Also, you don't get to feel the joy of having a journal arrive free in the mail with your poem in it. Instead, there is a link to your work that arrives in your inbox.

One issue is that some online journals—although it is rather uncommon—do charge a fee for readers to read the issue as a whole.

It is becoming more common for online journals to have submission fees, as well. This is a new development over the last few years, but it appears to be spreading at a rapid rate. Now many of the most established journals, both print and digital, charge to submit.

One of the biggest issues with online journals is that it is rather easy to start one. You could start one on a blog, or on a whim. I once knew an editor who started a journal when they were drunk. The work of maintaining one can be rather time-consuming, so it is not uncommon for an online journal to only last a few years.

Be aware that once you have given the journal your first publication rights, you can never get them back, even if they have long ago gone under (unless they never managed to publish your piece at all).

I have made some pretty general statements here, because when you go too far into the specifics, there are often exceptions.

I have submitted my work extensively to both online and print journals, and have had good and bad experiences with both.

Chapter 7: Three Things I Wish I Knew When I Was First Submitting to Literary Journals

When I first submitted to literary journals, I spent fifteen minutes or more on their websites tracking down any scrap or clue that might help my work be accepted. I read their guidelines multiple times. Every time I received a rejection, I read a lot into it.

Now, many years and thousands of submissions later, I have learned so much, and have become an efficient submitter of my work. More of my work is published each year. The first year I submitted I had three publications; this year I have had well over twenty. The following are things I wish I knew when I was starting out.

The difference between what journals say and what they mean

Most journals have a statement on their submission page about what they are looking for and what you should submit. Some of these things are clear and true. If they say they are looking for poetry and flash fiction under 1,000 words in length, they most certainly mean it. Do not submit a 2,000-word story.

Also, if they say they are looking only for works of science fiction or some other genre, only submit works from that genre to them.

However, many submission guidelines list things that are not helpful. They could even be misleading and waste your time if you focus on them too much.

For example, a lot of journals indicate they are looking for experimental work, but few define what they mean by that. By reading these same journals, I have concluded that experimental work appears to cover everything from a traditional haiku to a list of unrelated words.

I spent a lot of time when I was first submitting trying to match a journal's style with my submission. I know now that this was a waste of time, as what they said they wanted and what they actually wanted were two different things.

Another example is that many journals ask for you to only submit your best work. I have no clue what they mean by that. After all, what you think is your best work and what others think is your best work might be completely different things. The poems I often think of as my best are the ones I struggle the most to get published. The poems I think of as ok are often the ones that get

snapped up right away by literary journals. I am not alone in this. Many of my friends have had similar experiences.

Focus on what the journal is looking for in terms of concrete statements about length and genre, and ignore the other information for the most part.

Buying before submitting

Many literary journals need to sell copies to survive. Almost every single print journal I know and a lot of electronic journals try to encourage submitters to buy a copy of their journal before submitting. This is time-consuming. It is also an expensive proposition for a writer, who might be submitting a single piece or a few pieces of work to ten or twenty journals.

If you like the look of a journal and it is really up your alley, you should subscribe because you want to. Because you are interested in the work they are publishing, and want to support them.

If you want to get a better idea of the work they have published, many do have a few poems and short stories published online. It is worth spending a few minutes to read one or two of these.

On taking rejections seriously

Don't. When I receive a rejection email, I am not upset. I just update my submission tracker to reflect the rejection. Your work can be rejected for any number of arbitrary or legitimate reasons. If you take each rejection seriously, that will consume a lot of mental energy.

Because I had been an editor of a literary journal, I already understood how rejection worked. In my role as an editor I had accepted seven poems out of the over 1,000 submitted. When I was reading submissions, sometimes I was just so overwhelmed I was not able to give the poem the amount of time and more importantly, the mental energy, it deserved. That is not even taking my personal preferences as a reader into consideration. But that experience helped me not take the rejections I received very seriously.

Instead of thinking about the rejections you have received, focus on submitting as much as possible. There are so many good journals. Take the opportunity the numbers offer. Also, it is good to keep in mind that just because a journal rejects a piece of yours once, that does not mean they are not open to later submissions.

Often, pieces of mine have been accepted by a journal that previously rejected an earlier piece.

Once, I submitted to the same journal seven times before they accepted a piece of mine. But I am very glad I kept trying, because over time they have become one of my favorite journals to read. They consistently publish good and engaging work.

Chapter 8: How to Choose Where to Submit Your Work

Choosing where to submit is one of the trickiest propositions as a writer. I know some people who submit their work to a great variety of publications, others who only submit to the most prestigious, and some who only submit to journals they like. Really, where you submit is up to you.

However, there are good guidelines to keep in mind when submitting. You can personalize these as much as you like, and they can change from time to time; mine are constantly in flux. Most of the time when I submit, I do so based on at least one of the following factors:

Do they accept electronic submissions?

I am not much of a letter writer, and hate dealing with stamps. So I generally just submit to journals that accept submissions electronically. I can be much more efficient this way, and can submit to over five journals in an hour. I also don't have to bother with including any SASE in order to get feedback.

After I started submitting electronically, I noticed several differences with submission by post. For the latter, response times were much slower. It took most journals around six months to send me a response, either by letter or email. In addition, there were a lot more journals overall that never responded. They just never got back to me about my work, even though I included an SASE.

The upside to submitting by mail is that many journals—even established, respected journals—which only accept submissions by mail generally have a much higher acceptance rate, because fewer people submit this way. So that is worth keeping in mind.

Sometimes if a literary journal charges for electronic submissions, they still allow mailed submissions for free (although of course there is the cost of printing and postage). If this is the case, they make it clear on their website.

Now it is rare, but not unheard of, for a publication to not accept electronic submissions.

Is the journal respected?

Not all journals have a great reputation. Some journals accept too much work, others don't seem to have any quality control, while others treat their writers poorly or don't try to promote their

journals at all. Some just want you to pay for a print edition, and others will reflect badly on you if they appear in your biographical statement.

The more you submit, the easier it will be to tell if a journal has a good reputation or not. There are several obvious signs that will help you differentiate.

- Acceptance rate (if the journal has a very high acceptance rate, it is generally not as respected)
- Reviews
- How long it has been around
- Word of mouth
- Who they have previously published—if a lot of the writers they have previously published are names you know, that journal most likely has an excellent reputation.
- Size of readership
- Activity in community – if they host a reading series, attend conferences, and/or have an active online presence, that can very much help their reputation.

I submit to many respected journals, but also to journals that aren't particularly well known. However, I would never submit to a journal with a bad reputation that I know about.

How much work does the journal accept?

Some journals accept almost everything that is submitted to them, while others accept less than one out of every one hundred pieces they receive.

There are two websites that monitor acceptance rates. One is Duotrope and the other is The (Submission) Grinder. They base these acceptance rates on data that submitters give them. Links to both websites are in the additional resources section of this book. I go into more detail about the services both websites provide in Chapter 14.

Most people who use Duotrope and The (Submission) Grinder report every time a piece of work has been accepted or rejected. Because so many thousands of writers use these sites, there is a fair amount of data to work with. Not every journal has acceptance rates listed, but all of the popular ones do (particularly on Duotrope).

Some journals are notoriously hard to get into, such as *The New Yorker*, *Poetry Magazine*, *The Black Warrior Review*, and *The Paris Review*. Other journals are easy to get into, such as *Danse Macabre*, *Leaves of Ink*, and *Down in the Dirt*.

Most journals fall into the middle, accepting between five percent and thirty percent of the work they receive. So, keep that in mind when submitting.

Do you like the journal?

If you visit the website of an electronic journal and are overwhelmed by the bad graphics and the clunky interface, don't submit. You don't want your work to be associated with something you aesthetically dislike or find frustrating. The same should be true for print journals.

Whenever you visit a website or browse a magazine, evaluate it—not just in terms of visual aesthetics but also the writing it contains. You don't have to like everything a journal publishes, but you should at least like one of the poems, or one of the stories, before submitting. If it is a print journal and they require you to buy a copy to read the contents, then you have fewer options.

I often submit to brand new journals, ones that have never published a single issue, and some of these journals have been terrific. Most of the new journals I submitted to have gone on to have great reputations. I took a chance on them, and have seldom regretted it. Often, I will submit to these journals based entirely on

website aesthetics. This might sound shallow, but so far it has been a good strategy.

Are you willing to pay submission fees?

This question is becoming more and more important. Increasingly, the most prestigious journals charge submission fees. Sometimes they will waive this fee during certain times a year. At times this fee is just for electronic submissions, but often it is across the board. They will charge a reading fee for every submission you make. This is usually \$3 but it can go as high as \$15.

I do not pay reading fees, and Chapter 16 is devoted to reading fees, so I delve into the issue in more depth there.

Chapter 9: Good Literary Journals for Unpublished Writers

There are not any hard or fast rules on where you should submit when you are starting out. Although certain journals make it clear in their guidelines that they prefer submissions from unpublished writers, this is a rare request. Most journals are happy to publish a writer for the first time, but they are not overtly trying to do so.

Every writer has different goals and ambitions. Some just want to publish their work. They want to get it out into the world, and they don't care how prestigious the journal is, or how many authors it accepts. Other authors are only interested in publishers that publish genre. Some new writers just want personal feedback and others want a quick response time.

I really think you can submit your work to any journal that you want. But I do think that it is good to know what you are getting into. Below, I have listed some good places to get started if you are looking for journals that accept most of what they receive, journals with good reputations, and journals that respond quickly to submissions.

Journals that accept most of what they receive

Some journals accept over half of what they receive. Acceptance rates change all the time, so realize that over time these journals may become harder to get into. At the time of publishing the 6th edition, they all had an over forty percent acceptance rate.

These are not the only publishers that are easy to get into, but they are a good place to start if your sole goal is to get published in a literary journal.

Make sure you read the guidelines before submitting to know if your work fits. Just because they are approachable doesn't mean that they will accept angry poetry when they only publish nature poetry!

All of the information used to ascertain if the market is approachable or not was found through research done at the websites [Duotrope](#) and [The \(Submission\) Grinder](#).

50-Word Stories

As their name suggests, they publish only 50-word stories. They read submissions every month between the 1st and the 15th. They publish around 50% of what is submitted to them.

Anti-Heroin Chic

Anti-Heroin Chic publishes poetry, fiction and nonfiction. They are no longer permit simultaneous submissions.

Ekphrastic Review

An Ekphrastic work is writing or art about another work of art. The Ekphrastic Review publishes fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry. They accept a little under half of what they receive.

Ariel Chart

They publish poetry and short fiction.

Adelaide Literary Magazine

They publish over half of what they receive. They are a print and electronic journal that publishes short stories, reviews, poetry, creative non fiction, translation, and interviews.

Potato Soup

An online journal that publishes flash fiction and short stories. They have an over 50 percent acceptance rate.

Otoliths

An online journal of visual poetry, poetry, short fiction, essays, and art, they accept over half of what is submitted to them.

Children, Churches, and Daddies

They bill themselves as "*The UN*-religious, **NON**-family oriented literary and art magazine". They publish poetry, prose, and art work online.

Academy of the Heart and Mind

Their mission is to help emerging writers. They accept over 60% of what is submitted. They publish poetry, art, prose, and creative non-fiction online.

Writing in a Women's Voice

An online poetry journal that publishes over 50% of what is submitted to them. They do not respond if they are not interested.

Down in the Dirt

Down in the Dirt publishes fiction and poetry. They have an acceptance rate of 60%.

CafeLit

A UK based fiction journal that publishes almost 80% of what is submitted.

Drunk Monkey

A journal that publishes work about literature and film accepts about 40% of what is submitted.

The Cabinet of Heed

This online literary journal has an over 70% acceptance rate, and publishes fiction, poetry, and visual art.

The Poet

They accept almost 100% of what is submitted to them.

Grand Little Things

A journal of mostly formal poetry. They accept over 50% of what they receive.

Autumn Sky Poetry Daily

This journal has a very different approach. You are to submit one poem only, and if it is accepted you will know because it will be

published online within seven days of submitting it. If it does not appear, it was not chosen.

[The Rat's Ass Review](#)

As the editor of this journal states "Rat's Ass Review is an online poetry journal whose editorial fancies are no more arbitrary than any other; they are simply more overtly so. I publish what I like".

[Bewildering Stories](#) A webzine that publishes experimental and speculative writing

[The Daily Drunk](#) only accepts submissions on Thursdays and aim to reply within two days. They publish humor, film, and all pop culture-related submissions of previously unpublished fiction, nonfiction, poetry, lists, reviews, quizzes, and comics.

The most established and respected journals

These journals are very hard to get into. They are considered to be the best and most prestigious journals out there.

However, there is no reason not to start out trying to submit to these journals (as long as you are not submitting your work only

there). Set aside a packet or two to submit to the most prestigious journals, and then send your other poems to less competitive journals. You don't have to necessarily send your work to the most approachable ones. Most literary journals fall somewhere in the middle of these two extremes.

Most of the journals on this list accept less than one percent of what is submitted to them, so don't take rejection from them personally.

There are a lot of prestigious journals that did not make it on to this list because they charge for submissions. Every year it's becoming harder to find prestigious journals that don't charge.

[The Atlantic](#)

The Atlantic is open to submissions of poetry, nonfiction, and fiction. They pay well.

[The New Yorker](#)

The most famous (and most profitable) magazine with a literary bent, The New Yorker is very competitive to get into. However, they accept unsolicited submissions of fiction, poetry, and cartoons. They pay very well.

Poetry

This is the most famous poetry magazine there is. It is published by The Poetry Foundation. The first time you have a poem printed by them, an asterisk appears next to your name to note your appearance as a debut poet with them.

The Sun

The Sun is a fabulous ad-free magazine that has been around for over 40 years and has published so many famous writers, I have a hard time choosing even five. They publish fiction, creative nonfiction, memoir, and poetry. They only accept submissions through the mail. They even pay well.

Rattle

This prestigious print magazine also has a great weekly online feature called Poets Respond, which features poems that are responses to news articles published that week.

One Story

They publish one story per issue. They pay well and they have published many established, reputable, bestselling, and award-winning authors.

[The Paris Review](#)

This venerable print publication accepts only postal submissions. They publish poetry and fiction, as well as interviews, which they are rather famous for. They were founded in 1953 and have published many well-known writers since then. Some famous authors including Adrienne Rich, Philip Roth, V. S. Naipaul and Rick Moody were first published by The Paris Review.

[McSweeney's Quarterly](#)

Also known as Timothy McSweeney's Quarterly Concern, this literary journal publishes nonfiction and fiction only, and is reformatted every time it is published. Sometimes it resembles a journal, sometimes a box, sometimes something else entirely. Some of the many writers they have published include Denis Johnson, Jonathan Franzen, Joyce Carol Oates, Jonathan Lethem, and Michael Chabon. The amount they pay authors varies.

[The Threepenny Review](#)

According to Tony Kushner, "Everybody should rush right out and subscribe to The Threepenny Review". This quarterly arts magazine publishes poetry, fiction, memoir and criticism. They have very fast response times. They pay.

[The Rupture](#)

This online-only literary journal publishes fiction, excerpts, poetry, and nonfiction. They are highly respected and have published many contemporary authors that have become part of the establishment.

[AGNI](#)

This is a great print journal that publishes fiction, nonfiction and poetry. Known for publishing “important new writers early in their careers” (PEN), six of their contributors have gone on to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

[The Missouri Review](#)

This established print journal publishes some of the best nonfiction around; they also publish poetry and fiction. They do charge for electronic submissions, but postal submissions are free.

[ZYZZYVA](#)

ZYZZYVA has some of the best distribution I have ever seen. If a bookstore sells only three different literary journals, ZYZZYVA is one of those. They have published many famous poets and writers, including Haruki Murakami and Sherman Alexie.

[Beloit Poetry Journal](#)

A very respected Poetry journal.

[A Public Space](#)

This respected literary journal publishes terrific writing in a range of genres.

Journals with fast response times

It is good to start out by submitting your work to journals that have fast response times. It is rewarding to hear back from journals within a month, rather than a year, when you have forgotten all about your submission.

Submitting to journals with fast response times helps keep you motivated.

All of these journals respond to submissions within a month.

[Radar Poetry](#)

Radar Poetry is a wonderful electronic poetry journal that responds within three weeks to submissions.

[Red Eft Review](#)

This electronic literary journal focuses on publishing accessible poems. Their turnaround time is a couple of days.

The Dark Magazine

An electronic magazine that publishes fantasy and horror short stories. They respond within four days.

The Jellyfish Review

They publish flash fiction online and respond within a week. They are based out of Indonesia.

Eunoia Review

The Eunoia Review describes themselves as a publisher of “beautiful thinking”. They respond in three days or less.

Ghost Parachute

This flash fiction publisher responds to all submissions within two week.

Front Porch Review

A long running e-magazine that publishes fiction, poetry and creative non-fiction. They respond within a week.

The New Verse News

The New Verse News presents politically progressive poetry on current events and topical issues. Because of the nature of what they publish, respond within two weeks.

Dream of Shadows

A London-based website for horror and fantasy short stories. They generally respond within three days. They publish new stories monthly.

Thrush

Thrush is a highly respected poetry journal that responds to most submissions within 10 days.

Flash Frog

A new fast responding flash journal that pays.

Milk Candy Review

An ePublisher of beautifully weird flash fiction.

Journals that read submissions blind

A blind submission is one that is submitted to the literary journal in a way that the readers and editors can read all the submissions without knowing the name or anything else about the author who submitted to the journal.

The idea is that it takes away any bias someone might have against or for a particular ethnic heritage, or any other number of things. It hopefully means that your creative work is selected based on its own merits.

Blind submissions are particularly helpful for new authors who don't have previous publications. I had been writing for over a decade by the time I started submitting. But my bio was so thin and unsubstantial that I struggled to find anywhere to place my poems, until I started submitting to journals that read blind. The first two publishers who accepted my work read blind.

If a journal does not read blind the advantage can sometimes go to authors who have published a lot more work, even if the work they submit to that literary journal is not very good.

The literary journal I was editor for read blind, and I ended up rejecting a very famous author.

[Spry](#)

An online literary journal that publishes poetry and prose.

Burningword Literary Journal

Burningword Literary Journal accepts poetry, flash fiction, and flash nonfiction submissions for publication. They have electronic and print versions. They refer to their reading process as double-blind.

Into The Void

Into The Void is a UK based literary journal that publishes experimental literary work of poetry and prose. They publish print and online issues every couple of months.

Toyon

Toyon is a multilingual journal of literature and art that is edited and produced by Humboldt State University. They publish work in English and Spanish. They also accept reprints.

Sweet Tree Review

A wonderful online literary journal that publishes poetry and prose.

Border Crossing

They are particularly interested in publishing writing that crosses boundaries in genre or geography, and voices that aren't often heard in mainstream publications.

Stonecoast Review

They publish creative nonfiction, fiction, poetry, dramatic works, and visual arts

Lunch Ticket

This established literary journal publishes prose and poetry and returns all work that has identifying information attached to it.

Exciting New Literary Journals

In my experience, there are many reasons to seek publication in journals that have been around for less than a year. When a literary journal is new, the editors tend to be a lot more passionate. I have gotten handwritten thank you cards from editors of new publications, something that has never happened when my work was published by a more established journal.

Editors of new journals tend to be more generous with their time, energy, and enthusiasm. Plus, they are genuinely grateful that you trusted their new and untested journal with your work.

Several of the journals that published my work in their first issue have gone on to permanently feature my poems on their website as their ‘sample poem’, so that other submitters get a feel for the kind of work they like to read.

New journals have recorded podcasts about my work. My work ended up getting promoted a lot more than if it had been accepted by an older, more established journal.

With a new journal, the odds that work will be nominated for a literary prize increase as well. I have been publishing in new journals for ten years and some of the journals that published my work when I was a new writer are now established and several now have a less than 1% acceptance rate. However, when I originally submitted, they were far less competitive.

During that ten-year period, a number of those new journals went under, which is one of the major pitfalls to submitting to new journals. The other major pitfall is that you don't know what you are getting into, particularly if your work is published in the first issue. You can't look at past issues, online and in print, because they have none. In a way it is stepping into the unknown. In my experience though, the risk is always worth it because the reward can be much greater

GROUND journal

GROUND Journal is a biannual poetry journal of found object-inspired ekphrasis. Which is to say a poem that is a vivid description of an object, rather than a piece of art. I really like this area of focus for a journal, and it inspired me to write a poem for the first time in a while. They have a simple, but well designed website.

Boats Against The Current

A brand new literary journal, with a well designed website that is easy to navigate. Currently they are publishing poems regularly electronically but they plan to put together a print edition in fall 2022.

The Bureau Dispatch

They describe themselves as "an ode to the writer's bureau; an ongoing collection of stories accompanied by photographs of writers at their places of work." They publish short stories between 500 and 1,500 words. They are open to all narratives. They are currently closed, but will reopen to submissions on April 1st. I could not not feature them, because their website is both well organized and engaging and their theme is very well executed. Their contributor page for the first issue is wonderful.

Grim & Gilded

They are looking for stories and poetry steeped in the genres of horror, fantasy, and dark fiction. This is what they have to say about their foundation "Grim & Gilded was founded upon the idea of finding beauty within the darkness - the feverish seeking for

threads of gold among the twisting gloom and dusky shadows."

They were founded in December 2021 but are currently reading for their third issue.

[Discretionary Love](#)

The founding editor, Jessica Frelow "believes in the sanctity of love and all that comes with it. Discretionary Love was created to help people find solace in their vulnerability." They publish creative nonfiction, poetry, short stories, essays and videos all about love, both hard and easy, involving others and oneself.

[Grand Dame Literary Journal](#)

They publish fiction and memoir by women writers of a certain age. They do not strictly define that age. One of the many things I like about them is that besides having a nice website they are more open to mainstream work including literary chick lit, upmarket women's, romance, and thrillers. Their tone over all is very accessible, although they really stress that they only want error free work. They are a member of the CLMP.

Chapter 10: Beginner Mistakes You Can Avoid Making

The following mistakes are not all my own. As an editor, I have seen all of these mistakes among incoming submissions. You would most likely not make many of the mistakes listed below, but these are good to keep in mind, just in case. Some of these mistakes involve specific aspects of literary journal culture and can be easy to make as a new submitter.

Overly long cover letters

The first mistake is to have overly long cover letters. I already gave you a sample letter, but I really need to stress this point.

When I was an editor I received several actual job cover letters with and as poetry submissions. This information was not needed and not read, but made it clear that those submissions were from people who did not know how the system worked.

Not submitting more work when requested

Another common mistake, and an easy one to make, is to not submit your work to a journal that requests to see more of your work. If editors really like your work but are not sure about the particular poems or versions of the writing you sent in, they may send you a rejection letter requesting to see more work or to see a different edit of the submitted work. Take these personal requests very seriously. Editors do not send them out casually. You should make sure to submit your work to this journal again.

Violating the journal's rules

One of the biggest mistakes new submitters make is that after their work is accepted by a literary journal, they continue to post that accepted work online without linking to the journal. This is considered to be impolite and also violates the informal code of conduct or the formal contract many journals have.

Once your work has been published by the journal, the rights to the poem or story return to you, sometimes immediately (in which case it is fine to post them directly online, but you

should still link to the journal) and sometimes six months later. At that time, you can decide if you should or should not self-publish it on your website or submit it to journals that accept reprints. Even if you just publish it on your website, remember to give credit to the journal that originally published it.

Querying too soon or too frequently

Querying in this context, means sending a follow up email to check on the status of your submission.

Most of these literary journals are run by volunteers who are unpaid and do this in their spare time. Querying an editor a couple times a month, or even a year, to find out if your work has been accepted is most likely not going to help the situation.

Some journals have guidelines about when it is ok to query, but the general rule of thumb is to wait at least three months, or more ideally, six months. If they state a query by date on their website, always go by that.

Making assumptions about the journal

One of the mistakes I myself have made was to assume something about the size of the journal. Once, after my work was accepted, I wrote back to the editor; we had a mutual friend in common and I mentioned her in my reply. Unfortunately, that editor never saw my email. Another editor had taken their place. The awkward reply I received from the new editor—a complete stranger—was not an experience worth repeating.

Some journals have a huge staff of readers and editors; others are just one person. Some journals, particularly ones associated with academic journals, have a high staff turnover rate, with the editors and readers changing every semester or year. Other journals have had the same main editors for over two decades. It is always safest to assume that the editorial staff do not know who you are, even if you have been published by that journal before.

Not following the submission guidelines

I know I have said this before, but I have to say it again. Make sure that you never ignore any clear guidelines set out by the

journal. If they tell you to format your work a particular way, do it. They probably have a good, legitimate reason. Many journals receive so many submissions every month that it is hard to keep track of everything properly unless these guidelines are followed. They have every right to ignore your work, and many do so if you do not follow their guidelines.

Some journals use filters on their email account that automatically blocks or rejects all emails that don't follow the guidelines. So if you are not following the guidelines your work may not be seen by another person at all.

Submit simultaneously respectfully

If you submit your work simultaneously to more than one journal at a time, you have to make sure to go about it in the correct manner. Most contemporary journals in the US are open to simultaneous submissions. If a press does not mention simultaneous submissions, it is safe to assume that they accept them.

If a journal makes a direct statement that they do not accept simultaneously submitted work, it is up to you whether to

submit simultaneously or not. Most of the established authors I know do, anyway.

The most important thing that you can do is report when your work is accepted elsewhere. Say a journal accepts one of your poems or a short story that you have submitted to ten other places. You then have to write those ten other places to withdraw the piece.

If you submitted through the manager Submittable, you can withdraw the piece using the Submittable system. It is very easy to do, although a little time-consuming. If you submitted more than one piece and only one was accepted by another journal, you can tell the other publications of this situation. This is the right thing to do, and should ensure that you are on good terms with the editors whose magazines you submit to. It is the responsible way to simultaneously submit.

Be polite

You should always be polite. Since you never know who will be receiving your work, who will be reading it, or how many people will be reading it, it always pays to be polite.

The literary community is a small one, and the more you submit to journals, the more you will realize that everyone knows someone who is connected to you or connects deeper into the community. Comments written in jest in emails can easily be misconstrued, so be careful with that. Also, shooting off an angry email after receiving a form submission letter will get you remembered, and not for the right reasons.

It is better to be boring and polite than to accidentally insult someone. This works both ways. Journals that have not handled work well or have had rude editors tend to be known and avoided by the writing community at large.

Don't submit to just one journal

The worst mistake that most authors make when they first start out is that they submit to a very prestigious literary journal or magazine. My use of the singular here is deliberate.

Most authors start out by submitting to only one publication. That literary journal or magazine is usually extremely prestigious and competitive. *The New Yorker* is a first magazine that most writers submit to. And *The Paris Review* or *Rattle* are common first literary journals to submit to. Even if you are a writer not

familiar with literary journals or magazines, you probably know these names.

These journals accept far less than one percent of what is submitted to them. That does not mean that one shouldn't submit to them; there is nothing to lose and much to gain by submitting to a journal or magazine that is prestigious or well known.

The problem is this: the first-time submitter usually only submits to one well-known journal. Just the one. Then they wait for a response. Some journals respond quickly, but many of the established ones take six months to a year.

These places all accept simultaneous submissions, so authors could submit the same work elsewhere during this time, or those same authors could submit other work elsewhere to increase their chances of having a piece accepted. They should probably submit other work to a lesser known journal or two (or thirty, if they are really serious).

Most don't. I didn't when I first started out. What I did was wait almost a year for *The New Yorker* to reject the three poems that I submitted to them. That was a year's worth of potential publication that I lost, for no good reason. I could have been submitting elsewhere at the same time.

Don't take this as discouragement against submitting to *The New Yorker*. Take this as encouragement to submit to *The New Yorker*, *Rattle*, *AGNI*, and at least five other lesser known literary journals (although use a different packet of poems, or a different short story, if those journals have a higher acceptance rate).

Don't make the same mistake I did. Start submitting today, but don't stop with one journal. Keep going. Submit often. That is the best advice I can give any writer who is new to the world of publishing.

Submit different work to different tiers of journals

I tend to divide the journals I'm submitting into different tiers. The top tier consists of journals that only accept between 0 and 3% of what is submitted, according to Duotrope. All of the journals on the list of respected publishers are in this tier.

After that I tier journals in a 5-8% range. I create one packet of poems, or set aside one short story only for the top tier of journals and start submitting to it. I then choose another packet of poems or short stories for journals with 3-10% acceptance rates.

I never submit a poem or short story to an easier market at the same time I'm submitting it to a more challenging one. I don't want it to be accepted by the more approachable journal while

the challenging market is considering it. Submitting according to tiers really helps with that.

Don't mass submit

Some authors have the opposite problem from the previous point. Instead of just submitting to one journal, they submit the same work to a lot of journals at once, using the same email and just CCing or BCCing the various journals.

This means that individual submission guidelines are not met and often journals on the list are not even open to that kind of submission. I know this happens because *Authors Publish* regularly receives submissions of poems or stories this way, even though we do not publish poetry or fiction.

Chapter 11: Three Obvious Mistakes New Poets Make

I should clarify the phrase “new poets” as used in this context. What I mean is poets new to publishing their work in literary journals.

I actually made these mistakes for the first decade I wrote poetry. I did not understand why they were mistakes. I didn't understand why they frustrated editors and fellow writers. Now I do.

When you are used to reading poetry closely, every word, every line break, each capitalization—they all count, so any mistakes within the poem distracts and throws the reader out of the poem. Whenever I guest edit a journal I try not to just dismiss poems containing these errors, but it can be hard not to. After all, these mistakes make it clear that the poet is not necessarily paying attention to detail. As a submitting poet, you want to make it clear that details matter to you.

Capitalization at the beginning of every line

If you read poems by Shakespeare and Emily Dickinson, or other works by historic poets, the first letter of the first word on every

line of the poem is capitalized. It was the way poems were written, historically. In the world of contemporary poetry, it is rarely done. Unfortunately, in the modern world of poetry, capitalizing the first letter on the first word of every line usually means that your word processor automatically capitalized those words for you.

When a poet or an editor gets used to reading poetry closely, everything in the poem is examined and taken into consideration. All of those automatically capitalized words are distracting. They don't serve the poem, and are not something the poet intended to do, but are just there. Usually, their biggest function is to tell the poetry editor or reader that you are new to this, and did not notice.

The good news is that you can turn this function off easily. When you are in Word, go to Tools and then to AutoCorrect Options. On the AutoCorrect tab, deselect the “Capitalize First Letter of Sentences” checkbox and click “OK.”

Out of the three mistakes, this is the most distracting and the biggest tip-off to established poets and editors that you are new to submitting.

Punctuation at the end of every line

Line breaks are difficult. Figuring out where to make line breaks can take me hours. But a lot of people just make the line breaks after punctuation like this:

I love roses,
tulips,
and you.

It is easy to spot in this example, but this problem is often hidden by longer lines. Many poets just don't realize what they are doing. Also, this is important to stress, sometimes the right place for a line break is after punctuation, just as long as you are not doing it on the end of every line.

[This article](#) is a good starting place in terms of thinking about line breaks.

Sporadic punctuation

You can write a poem without any punctuation. That is not as accepted as writing poems with punctuation, but it is becoming more widely accepted, and it's more helpful than writing a poem with sporadic punctuation. What do I mean by sporadic punctuation? I mean this:

All of the moons, beamed down on us
a cascade of light in the darkness

The man cane in from the lake
drenched in mist

There is one comma but no periods in this example. Sporadic punctuation can be done in many ways. Sometimes there is one period in a poem of twenty-five lines, sometimes only a few commas are missing.

Sometimes the poet uses line breaks instead of commas, which only works if you are avoiding punctuation entirely.

Conclusion

If you've made these mistakes in the past, as I have, they are all relatively easy to change. Editors are often quick to make judgments, casting aside poems because of the smallest errors. By avoiding these mistakes, you are giving your poetry the chance it deserves.

Chapter 12: What to Expect After You Submit

Once your work is submitted to the “goal” you set for yourself (be that five journals, or twenty), you might ask yourself what comes next?

Waiting is par for the course. I like to submit to at least a few journals with a rapid response time, so that I can start getting feedback within a few days of finishing a round of submissions.

It is best to submit the same story or packet of poems to all of the fast responding journals. That way if part or all of a submission is accepted, you don't have to withdraw it from journals with a longer waiting time. Instead you can just withdraw it from the journals with a quick response time, and then submit a new round to them, unless they have restrictions about how many times you can submit.

Some publishers have restrictions about how many times you can submit in a given period, but they make that clear as part of their submission guidelines. Most journals do not have restrictions on the amount of times you can submit per year.

If your work is accepted in one journal and it is still out elsewhere, do make sure to withdraw it. If a journal accepts one poem or one piece of flash out of a whole packet, most times you can just withdraw the one piece of writing from consideration, while allowing the remaining stories and poems to continue being considered.

Below is a sample withdrawal message.

Dear Editors,

I apologize for the inconvenience, but “Moonbeam” was just accepted for publication elsewhere. The rest of the poems that I submitted to you remain available.

Gratefully,

Emily

It is important to send this message out as quickly as possible. Also, update your submission tracker accordingly.

The waiting time itself can be tough. If you have a Duotrope subscription you can log in and see if anyone else has received a response from that market and you can check how long they are

taking on average to respond to submissions. Being able to check these things can be very helpful.

If you don't have a Duotrope account, you can check the literary journals submission guidelines. Often their ideal response times are mentioned there. Sometimes they will update this page if they are running behind schedule. If there is no information about response times mentioned, assume that you will have to wait around six months.

Do not query the publication before six months have passed unless they explicitly tell you to do otherwise. I have received a number of emails from writers who have queried a week after submitting. This is in no way helpful.

When you query, keep your wording simple and polite. An example of a query letter is below.

Dear Editors,

I need to query about the status of my submission. I submitted the short story "How to be a Tree" seven months ago, and have yet to hear back. I am just checking to make sure it did not get lost in the shuffle.

Thank you for your time,

Emily

On Submittable it is easy to check on where a submission is during the process. Before anyone opens the submission, it is marked as received, and after it is opened it is marked as in progress.

You do not have to respond to rejections, unless they are personal, and even then, it is not expected.

Personal rejections are rare and should be taken seriously. If an editor mentions a specific piece or section of a piece and writes that they want to see more like that, definitely submit to that journal again.

For a long time, I was unaware of tiered rejection. Tiered rejections are pre-written standard responses to submissions that vary depending on how much the editor wants to see your work again.

It can be very helpful to know that you got a nicer, albeit still standard, rejection letter from a very competitive journal. Tiered

rejections encouraged me to keep submitting to the same very prestigious journal, till finally they accepted a piece of mine.

It can be hard to figure out if a journal is tiered or not, but thankfully there is the wonderful [rejection wiki](#) which posts the tiered rejections from journals.

When I receive a rejection, I update my submission tracker right away and I make sure to note if it was a standard or tiered rejection.

Sometimes I have submitted to the same journal for years before receiving an acceptance.

Chapter 13: Literary Journals That Pay

Writers

"It is a sad fact about our culture that a poet can earn much more money writing or talking about his art than he can by practicing it."

– **W.H. Auden**

As someone who makes their living writing about writing and publishing, I can attest to how truthful Auden's quote is. It is hard making a living as a writer, but it is even harder making a living as a poet or an author of short fiction.

Many literary journals do not pay their writers. This is because most are projects of passion, are not for profit, or are run by an individual or a small group of people who love to write and read, but do not necessarily have a lot of money. Many of these journals are run by schools with underfunded English departments. I would say that over 75% of literary journals do not pay their writers. I have no problem with that, but it is nice to be paid occasionally.

For your reading pleasure are literary journals that do pay. They may not be the most prestigious journals (although some of them are), and not all are open to submissions right now, but most are. All of them do pay their authors. Some pay well and others pay a token amount.

Frontier

Frontier Poetry accepts submissions year-round. They accept work from both new and emerging poets who have not published more than one full-length collection of poetry. Authors of any number of chapbooks and story collections may submit. Frontier pays poets \$50 for each published poem, up to \$150. They have a faster response option for BIPOC identifying writers. To learn more, visit their website [here](#).

Escape Artists (Escape Pod, PseudoPod, Cast of Wonders, PodCastle) [Escape Artists](#) is the publishing group that publishes all of its stories in audio and text formats. They are known for their genre podcasts and have a large following. Each publication has a separate focus. For example Cast of Wonders focuses on a young adult audience whereas Escape Pod only publishes sci-fi.

They will soon launch CatsCast, which is speculative fiction about cats - you can read the announcement [here](#). The various publications pay \$100 for full-length reprints and more for original works.

Banshee

Banshee, a print literary journal from Ireland, accepts submissions of poetry, fiction, flash fiction, and creative nonfiction. All authors published in the journal will receive payment, as well as a copy of the magazine. Visit their website [here](#).

Salamander

Salamander, an established and long running print journal, pays contributors for poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and flash. Although they do not disclose how much. You can learn more [here](#).

Clarkesworld

Clarkesworld Magazine is a Hugo and World Fantasy Award-winning science fiction and fantasy magazine that publishes short stories, interviews, articles and audio fiction on a monthly basis. They pay very well. Visit their website [here](#).

Nashville Review

This respected paying market is open to submissions in January, May, and September. Learn more [here](#).

The Malahat Review

The Malahat Review is an established and respected print magazine based out of Canada. They mostly publish work by Canadian writers but are open to international writers as well. They purchase first world serial rights and, upon acceptance, pay CAD65 per published page, plus a one-year subscription. Copyright reverts to the author upon publication. To learn more, visit their website [here](#).

Wood Cat Review

Wood Cat Review is a new online journal of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction about life in the wilderness. Wood Cat Review pays authors published in the journal. Pay for poetry and prose is \$20 for the first page and \$10 for subsequent pages, with a \$50 maximum payment. Learn more [here](#).

Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine

This paying and competitive magazine publishes short stories and novellas in the mystery genre. To learn more, read their submission guidelines [here](#).

Breath & Shadow

They publish only authors who have disabilities, although they define that term broadly. The pay scale is \$20 for poetry, and \$30 for fiction and nonfiction. To learn more, visit their website [here](#).

Contrary Magazine

Contrary Magazine publishes short stories, flash fiction, essays, and poetry. They pay \$20 per author per issue -- the length of the piece does not factor into the payment. To learn more, visit their website [here](#).

Claw & Blossom

All work they publish must contain elements of the natural world and most issues are themed. They publish poetry and prose. They pay \$25 per accepted piece. Visit their website [here](#).

Eye to the Telescope

Eye to the Telescope is an established online journal that focuses on publishing speculative poetry. They pay authors 3¢ per word, rounded up to the nearest dollar. They pay a minimum of \$3 per poem, and a maximum of \$25. They usually have themed issues. Learn more [here](#).

Aniko Press

A thoughtfully designed print and digital magazine that also runs

a regular (payment free) flash fiction contest. They pay for fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry, and each themed issue contains ten to fifteen pieces. To learn more, go [here](#).

The Sun

A wonderful, advertisement-free magazine. They pay from \$300 to \$2,000 for fiction, essays, and interviews, and \$100 to \$250 for poetry. They also give contributors a complimentary one-year subscription to *The Sun*. Learn more [here](#).

THEMA

A literary journal that pays \$25 for short stories and \$10 for flash fiction and poetry. They usually have themed submission calls. To learn more, visit their website [here](#).

The Virginia Quarterly Review

This established literary journal publishes poetry and prose and they pay very well. Learn more [here](#).

Poetry

Poetry Magazine was founded in Chicago by Harriet Monroe in 1912. The magazine established a reputation early on by publishing many important poems of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, and many others. They pay a minimum of \$300 per poem. They

are reading submissions on land acknowledgement and on monuments until end-March, apart from unthemed submissions. You can visit their website [here](#).

Short Story Magazine

Short Story is an online magazine based on Substack that hopes to provide amazing short stories to subscribers, and to pay authors well. They only publish one story a month, but the published author receives \$100 plus 50% of the subscription revenue. Depending on the number of subscribers, this could provide excellent payment. According to the editor: “The New Yorker pays roughly \$7,500 per story, and I sincerely hope to go way past that.” However it is clear that the current revenue is considerably less than that. Learn more [here](#).

AGNI

This is a respected and established journal. They are published by Boston University. They charge for electronic submissions, but you submit via post for free. You can visit their website [here](#).

Bennington Review

Bennington Review publishes two print issues a year and they pay their writers. Prose writers receive up to \$200, poetry writers are paid \$20 per poem. To learn more, visit their website [here](#).

Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine

Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine is one of the better-paying markets there is out there, for science fiction content. They predominantly favor character-oriented short stories and poetry. You can visit their website [here](#).

Cricket Media's Literary Journals

Their flagship publication, billed as "The New Yorker for Kids," publishes poetry and fiction aimed at 9-14-year-olds. Read our full review [here](#).

However, they also have other magazines called Babybug (for children 6 months to 3 years), Ladybug (3-6 years), and Spider (6-9 years).

You can see their submission guidelines [here](#). They pay well.

CÔNFIGÕ MAGAZINE

CÔNFIGÕ publishes new short fiction, poetry and art from around the world. The journal is a beautiful print-only magazine. They pay £20 to all contributors. Learn more [here](#).

One Story

One Story publishes 12 short story a year, at the rate of one per issue. They have a print and e-versions of the story that they publish. Often, the published story is accompanied by an

interview with the author of the story. They pay \$500 per story and offer 25 contributor copies. To learn more, go [here](#).

The New Yorker

It would be strange if such a list did not mention The New Yorker, which is legendary for how well it pays its writers, among other things. The New Yorker does not release the exact amount they pay on their website, although they pay very well. It is more a popular magazine than a literary journal, and publication in the New Yorker can greatly help one's reputation as a writer. Often it leads to book deals and many other publications. Of course, because of this, it is very hard to get a piece accepted by the New Yorker. Many famous authors still try for years. It is easy to submit online, and a wonderful opportunity. To learn more, read their submission guidelines [here](#).

The Deadlands

A paying speculative fiction market. They accept reprints. Learn more [here](#).

The Forge

They pay \$75 for nonfiction and fiction. Submit early in the month. When they run out of free Submittable submissions they

start charging, but the number re-sets every month. Learn more at their website [here](#).

Grain Magazine

Published four times per year, Grain Magazine is an internationally acclaimed literary journal that publishes engaging, surprising, eclectic, and challenging writing and art by Canadian and international writers and artists. They also have a monthly Submittable cap and start charging when they hit it. They pay a minimum of CAD50 and a maximum of CAD250. Learn more [here](#).

The Paris Review

This is a very respected print journal and they do not disclose the amount they pay, only say that they do. They always are open to postal submissions, and have limited submission windows via Submittable. To learn more, visit their website [here](#).

Analog

A respected science fiction journal that publishes everything from short stories to novellas. They pay well. Read their full submission guidelines [here](#).

Typehouse Literary Magazine

This respected Portland-area print journal pays \$25 per piece. They have some fee-free submission periods. Learn more [here](#).

Strange Horizons

They have a very low acceptance rates, pay professional rates, and most importantly, they publish very good stories in the speculative fiction genre. They currently have a [Southeast Asian](#) special submission call, until 30 April. Learn more about Strange Horizons [here](#). They have an associated market which only publishes translations, **Samovar**.

MARY: A Journal of New Writing

A thoughtfully designed online journal sponsored by the MFA in creative writing program at Saint Mary's College of California. Contributors are paid \$50 per piece. Learn more [here](#).

Frozen Wavelets

An e-zine focusing on speculative flash fiction and poetry that pays their contributors. Learn more [here](#).

The Puritan

This Canadian literary journal publishes and pays for poetry and prose. Learn more [here](#).

The Gettysburg Review

An established publisher of poetry and fiction. They have a fee

for electronic submissions but all postal submissions are free.

You can learn more [here](#).

Blue Marble Review

Blue Marble Review is a quarterly online literary journal that publishes art and creative writing by people between the ages of 13-22. They pay them \$25 per piece, or \$75 for cover art. Learn more [here](#).

The Other Side of Hope

A new journal dedicated to showcasing writing by authors who are immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. The journal is also edited by immigrants and refugees, and aims to serve the immigrant and refugee community worldwide. They pay authors £100 for work published in the print issue, and £50 for work published online. Asylum seekers get a £50/£100 gift card. Learn more [here](#).

Flypaper Lit

A literary journal based in Ohio that pays a token amount (\$10). Learn more [here](#).

Voyage

A terrific literary journal focused on publishing Young Adult fiction and nonfiction. According to their [FAQ](#) they pay \$200 per

story. To learn more, go [here](#).

The Cincinnati Review

They publish fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, and are an established paying market. They are open to submissions in September, December, and May - they have a cap during open submission periods, and submissions close when this cap is reached. Learn more [here](#).

Uncharted

A new journal that publishes crime, mystery, science fiction, fantasy, horror, and thriller short stories and pays 200 dollars per short story. Learn more [here](#).

Chapter 14: Literary Journals That Publish Genre Writing

Most literary journals are interested in literary work, by which they mean, not genre work. The [dictionary definition](#) of genre is “a category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter.”

However, in the context of writing, genre can refer to poetry, prose, or nonfiction in terms of form. Or it can be a subject matter classification referring to science fiction, mystery, or various other established types of stories.

Most literary journals assume that you will not submit genre work to them, because many don't consider it to be literary. This leaves many genre writers with fewer options in terms of short story and poetry publication. However, there are journals that just publish genre work.

The majority of these focus on science fiction and mystery. But there are also horror, western, romance, fantasy, thriller, and other genre publishers on this list. We tried to focus on literary journals that specialized, not ones that were open to every genre in the book.

Not all of these literary journals are currently open to submissions. A link to their website or our full review of the publisher is embedded in their name. The genres they accept are mentioned in the brief description.

Unlike most literary journals, the majority of these pay.

The Five-Two

Always open to submissions, this online journal publishes crime poetry.

The Copperfield Review

The Copperfield Review is a literary journal for writers of historical fiction. They pay all their authors.

Lackington's

Lackington's is a speculative fiction magazine that focuses on different themes in each issue. They are a paying market.

Escape Pod

This is an audio science fiction journal that pays.

PodCastle

This is a fantasy audio journal by the publishers of Escape Pod, and pays.

PseudoPod

This is a horror audio journal by the publishers of Escape Pod, and pays.

Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine

This paying and competitive magazine publishes short stories and novellas in the mystery genre.

Cast of Wonders

This young adult short fiction market is open to flash fiction and short stories up to 6,000 words in length. They publish primarily science fiction, fantasy, and horror. They are a paying market and they publish reprints.

Mystery Tribune

This online magazine publishes original mysteries as well as interviews and articles about mysteries.

Close to the Bone

This literary journal focuses on regularly publishing gritty fiction about crime. They will also consider western, science fiction and maybe fantasy stories, as long as they are gritty.

Asimov's Science Fiction

Stories in *Asimov's* have won many Hugo and Nebula awards. They pay well.

Analog

This is a respected science fiction journal that publishes everything from short stories to novellas. They pay well.

Suspense Magazine

All stories must be in the suspense/thriller/mystery/horror genres.

Frontier Tales

They publish western and historical short fiction.

[Apex Magazine](#)

Apex Magazine is a beautiful publication that publishes science fiction, fantasy, and horror. They are a paying market.

[Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine](#)

They publish every kind of mystery short story: the psychological suspense tale, the deductive puzzle, the private eye case – the gamut of crime and detection, from the realistic to the more imaginative.

[Strange Horizons](#)

They have very low acceptance rates, pay professional rates, and most importantly, they publish very good stories in the science fiction genre.

[The Dark](#)

They have a very quick response time, sometimes within a day, but often within two weeks. They focus on publishing dark fantasy and horror. They pay professional rates.

[Lightspeed](#)

Lightspeed is an established monthly electronic publisher of science fiction and fantasy writing. Many of the works that have been published there have gone on to be nominated for prestigious genre awards, including the Hugo. They pay all of their authors.

[The Dark City](#)

This crime and mystery magazine pays their authors.

[Clarkesworld Magazine](#)

They publish science fiction and fantasy works in print and eMagazine editions. They are highly respected. They pay professional rates.

[Augur Magazine](#)

They want “dream-touched realism, slipstream, fabulism, magical realism and, for lack of a better descriptor, “literary” speculative fiction.” They accept both young adult and adult pieces. They are a paying market.

[Andromeda Spaceways](#)

They accept science fiction, fantasy and supernatural horror works up to 10,000 words in length. They accept poetry and nonfiction works as well. They pay all their authors.

[Aphelion Webzine](#)

Aphelion Webzine publishes science fiction, fantasy and horror.

[Mystery Weekly Magazine](#)

This is an online magazine that publishes mystery stories on a monthly basis. Avoid excessive profanity or violence. They are a paying market.

[Eye to the Telescope](#)

Eye to the Telescope is a quarterly publication for speculative poetry that has been running since 2011. Speculative poetry they publish includes fantasy, science fiction and horror. They pay.

[Beneath Ceaseless Skies](#)

They publish “literary adventure fantasy”: stories with a secondary-world setting and some fantasy feel, but written with a literary approach. They pay professional rates.

[The Dark Sire](#)

Submit, Publish, Repeat

They publish poetry and fiction in the genres of fantasy, horror and Gothic.

The Fairy Tale Review

They publish prose, poetry, art, non-fiction, drama, and comics that pertain to or are inspired by fairy tales.

Chapter 15: How to Find Literary Journals

Now that you know a little more about submitting, you're probably curious about where to find listings of literary journals. There are a lot of literary journal listings out there, and some are better than others.

Authors Publish does not have a formal list of journals at this point, but we review one literary journal a week and regularly post curated lists of journals. In our longer reviews, we include submission guideline details, acceptance rates, and payment information.

The four biggest listing services all have pros and cons, but all are worth using. Below, I review all four.

Duotrope

Duotrope lists almost all the journals that are open to free submissions. They also list journals that involve a fee, but they always try to make note of that. However, journals are making that harder for Duotrope to keep track of, by charging sometimes and not others, or charging for some ways to submit and not others.

To find journals on Duotrope, you can sign up for their weekly market update, which is an email that informs you of what journals have opened and which ones have closed. You can also use their search engine and their statistics page for more detailed information.

There are many ways to find new markets on Duotrope. In my opinion, their statistics page is the most helpful place to start. Here, they list the journals that have the highest and lowest acceptance rates. They also list the journals that are slowest to respond and those that are the quickest. These are all helpful statistics to know.

I also like using their advanced search features which allow you to eliminate all journals with high acceptance rates efficiently. It can also be used to find a journal with a particular aesthetic. For a while I was having much better luck submitting to UK-based journals and so I used the search feature to show me only those.

If a journal takes more than a year on average to respond, I won't submit to them. If a journal accepts over twenty percent of what is submitted to them, I will not send them my work. It is hard to

determine these two things if you don't have a Duotrope subscription.

Duotrope is a wealth of information. You can monitor the journals you submit to there, and use their handy submission tracker to keep track of where you have submitted your work.

It also provides interviews with the publishers, informs you on how much they pay, and provides various other kinds of information.

Unfortunately, almost a decade ago Duotrope started charging \$5 a month (or \$50 a year) to use most of its services. They often offer free trial memberships for thirty days, so if you are curious, you can always try that option.

I pay the \$5 a month and do not regret it, but honestly it depends how much you end up submitting. I also think the information they now have is skewed because it is primarily used by established poets in the US, whereas before, it had more variable contributors. Because all the information they provide is based on user submitted reports, the shift in users because of the paywall has affected (although it is hard to tell how much) the overall quality of the site.

Over the past two years particularly, I've seen the quality of information available on Duo trope decrease. Fewer users are inputting information and many markets are poorly covered. They've also expanded into other areas, including agent listings and having their own submission tracker.

[The \(Submission\) Grinder](#)

The (Submission) Grinder is a submission tracker that is the free alternative to Duotrope. It is run by *Diabolical Plots*, which is a genre zine that has been around since 2008, although The (Submission) Grinder was started later.

They publish statistics about acceptance rates and response times just like Duotrope does, except they are a free service. However, the feedback is not at the same level, as fewer people use their service at this point. Hopefully that will change over time.

Most markets listed with them have one or two reports, not dozens or hundreds. Only major journals have more than a dozen submission reports at this point. However, that is about ten more reports than they had at this time last year, so they do seem to be getting more contributors, and the quality of information appears to be improving.

To see response times and acceptance rates on The (Submission) Grinder, you do not even have to sign up for the service; you can just browse the website. In order to contribute to the website and help improve it, you have to sign up.

[Poets & Writers](#)

Poets & Writers is a magazine that also has a website filled with resources. All of their resources are free and easy to use. In my experience, the most helpful resource they provide is their literary magazine listing service.

They do not list as many journals as Duotrope, and most of the journals they list are based out of the US. However, they still list over 2,000 journals.

You can look through the listings alphabetically by title, or apply search filters. When they list a journal, they specify what kind of creative writing they accept, if they accept simultaneous submissions, and whether they accept electronic submissions. They also tell you if the journal pays, even if it is only a contributor copy. They also list the dates the journal is open to submissions, as

well as if it is an electronic or print journal. However, they do not list if the journal charges reading fees or not, which is important.

This is a lot of helpful information, but nothing is given about response times or acceptance statistics. You still have to visit the literary journals' individual websites to find out the details of their submission guidelines. *Poets & Writers* also does not update their website as frequently as Duotrope, so much of their information is out of date.

Submittable Discover Opportunities

Submittable, the submission manager widely used by many literary journals, launched a page two years ago where they list markets.

The page has a very easy to use filter system so you don't even have to be tempted by the names of any journals that charge fees. You just select the large “no submission fees” button on the top of the right side, under the search bar.

They call this service Discover Opportunities. The main limitation of this new service is they just list sites that use Submittable, but that is a lot of places now. They also don't have any additional information regarding response times or acceptance rates, which

would have been nice, because they clearly have the capacity to track such things.

The other issue is that people use Submittable for all sorts of things, from literary conference panels to film festivals, so you are not just seeing calls for written submission, although the title usually makes it clear what they are looking for.

As well as by fee, you can also search by deadline, or lack of deadline. You must open a free Submittable account to access all this information, but you will need to have one anyway to submit to any of the journals listed on the site. If you have submitted to more than two journals in the last half decade, you will probably already have an account. Even the *New Yorker* uses Submittable now.

[chill subs](#)

chill subs is a new sortable database of places one can submit to.

As the name suggests, it is more informal than Duotrope and other databases, and it embraces certain aspects of contemporary internet culture much more. It also feels to me much more practical than a lot of the databases out there.

You can search by magazine or contributor name, response time, and vibe, and also if they are open for submissions and offer expedited submissions (mostly for a fee or to historically excluded communities). It also allows writers to only see publishers that allow reprints, simultaneous submissions, and free submissions. The fact that they allow you to filter out all the markets that charge submission fees, is personally the most important for me, and something that's impossible to do with a number of other databases. You can eliminate all markets that don't pay, as well.

One of the aspects of the site I really appreciate is the promotion and hype section. They share how active literary journals are on social media, and they make it clear which publishers continue to promote the work of authors that previously published with them. I'm also grateful that they make it clear if they are available in print or if examples of the work they've published is online.

Currently the only downside to the database that I can see is how limited it is. The last time I checked, it only had 129 literary journals listed, and less than half of these journals were open to submissions. However, they seem to be actively working on it, and you can suggest journals via a link at the bottom of the page.

[Lit Mags News Roundup](#)

Becky Tuch, the founder of the now-defunct Review Review, has started a new Substack about literary journals called Lit Mag News Roundup that does an excellent job, even for free subscribers. It is more like Authors Publish, in that it does more than just list literary journals -- it publishes interviews with literary journal founders, links to recently published listings, as well as grant opportunities. For paid subscribers, there are also submission events.

You can get a free 30-day trial right now, and subscriptions cost \$5

a month, or \$50 a year, but I've been a free subscriber for three months now, and am very grateful for the amount of free knowledge that is shared. You can sign up for either version of the newsletter [here](#).

Chapter 16: Paying to Submit

I have submitted my work to over 200 different journals in the past two years, and many more before that. When I first started submitting a decade ago, one or two journals charged writers a couple of dollars to submit their work for consideration.

This fee did not cover anything else. It did not ensure that the writer's work was considered more seriously, nor did it guarantee editorial feedback—all it did was allow the writer to submit their work for consideration to be published.

Most journals back then justified this choice by saying that they were charging writers only \$2 to \$3, and that it cost writers about that much to submit via post anyway. I still took issue with that argument. After all, it is one thing to pay the post office if submitting by mail is the only way; it is another thing to pay a literary journal to read submissions, particularly since most literary journals don't pay their authors. So, you are paying a journal to consider your work that they probably won't publish at all, but even if they do, they often won't compensate you for it.

I am not opposed to supporting literary journals. I subscribe to a number of them, but they should not be making their money by

charging authors directly without offering anything tangible in return. On that same note, I will only enter a contest in which I am rewarded with a subscription to the magazine or with a copy of the winning book.

Submission fees make it much harder for authors whose finances are constrained. Journals that claim to want to support historically underrepresented writers, and that charge for submissions, are being particularly hypocritical. Three dollars might not sound like much but it can really add up, particularly if you have to withdraw work, or the journal you paid doesn't respond to your submission at all (this has happened many times to my students).

In the last six years, there has been a solid shift toward charging authors submission fees. Most magazines that charge authors are not going to pay these authors, even if they accept their work. This is a real issue for me.

At first, only older, more established journals were charging readers to submit electronically. It was strange because most of these journals would not consider work submitted by mail, so paying was truly your only option.

Some journals said this was because submission services that save time for editors, like Submittable, charged the magazines to use

them. Still, that did not make a huge difference. Many journals managed to skirt this issue by selling people copies, having Kickstarters with rewards writers actually wanted, etc. Also, they could always use email for submissions, particularly for a smaller journal.

I have seen brand new journals with no reputation charging readers \$15 to submit their work. This issue has gotten out of hand.

It particularly bothers me that over half of the most prestigious journals, the ones that help your career as a whole, now charge.

The tipping point for journals over all, has still not been reached. You can still submit to the vast majority of journals for free. I am hoping it stays that way, but I am not assuming that it will. We have gotten reached the tipping point in terms of the more established journals. A little over half of the most prestigious journals, now charge for most submissions, although some do have limited free reading periods every year.

One of the ways that I push against this movement of charging to submit is by not submitting to journals that do charge, and have no fee-free options (for instance, some journals have certain reading periods when they do not charge a fee to read, or postal submissions are free, or have a limited number of entries free on

their submission managers each month). I also never review them. *Authors Publish* only publishes reviews of journals that do not charge for submissions.

I always encourage my students to submit to fee free journals work. These are the journals, that in my mind deserve the best work.

Even though I no longer submit to *Crazyhorse* and many other esteemed journals, there are still hundreds of prestigious journals that I can submit to without paying a premium to have my work considered.

One of the additional factors that complicates this whole issue is solicited submissions. Many of the more prestigious journals already solicit many of their submissions from poets that they admire. These poets generally do not submit through normal avenues. They never pay to have their work considered and it is almost always accepted.

Ultimately, you will have to make your own mind up about paying to submit to journals. It is your money, after all. But in the meantime, I will continue to review excellent journals that do not charge writers a fee to have their work considered, or which have free submission alternatives.

I do want to say that one of the newer developments that has been positive is that some journals offer feedback to submitters for between ten and twenty dollars. Sometimes this fee is well worth paying, particularly if you struggle to get unbiased feedback elsewhere. Feedback is valuable and worth paying for, if you can.

Chapter 17: Are Contests Worth the Fee?

As an author, editor, professional submitter, and poet, I end up talking about contests a great deal. A lot of writers enter contests, but as a general rule we do not review contests on *Authors Publish*. This is because there is an entry fee attached to most contests.

Many literary journals fund their work and promote their literary journals by running contests, although small presses also host contests.

The first time I ever participated in a contest I was not entering it; instead, I was an intern for a small press that was hosting a contest. This event took place a number of years ago, and this press is no longer in business. My job as an unpaid intern was to read approximately 400 manuscripts. I had a little over two months to reduce these 400 manuscripts to ten. I was the only one to read these 400 manuscripts, even though the official contest guidelines said that each manuscript would be reviewed by a group of qualified readers. The submission fee was \$30 for each manuscript.

I was told that once I reached the ten final manuscripts, I was to hand them over to my boss, the head of the press, to read. After he

read the final ten he would hand over the final three to a famous writer who was the official judge (and who was being paid a large sum).

However, at the last moment, my boss specified several things he wanted to make sure would be included in the chapbook. They were very specific details about the gender of the author and the topic of the poems. One of the manuscripts I had discarded fell into this category exactly, so I removed one other manuscript from the pile of ten and put this one in instead, even though it was not particularly good.

This was the manuscript that ended up winning.

All contests are not like this. Many first book contests are highly regulated and have large teams of readers. These contests are usually very prestigious and highly competitive. I have entered a number of these contests because I understand that as a poet, the best way to land a good publisher for your first book is by winning a contest. Don't assume the judge of the contest will ever see your work, as most judges only read what the readers deem to be the top manuscripts or pieces. This means the readers have a great deal of control over who wins.

There are a number of scams aimed at writers trying to publish manuscripts. Many presses will agree to publish your book even if it is not a winner, but only if you presell a large number of copies. Finishing Line Press is particularly notorious for this.

Many literary journal contests are expensive, but the competition is less steep. Sometimes they have so few entries in the contest that they struggle to find a winner they can print. When academic journals, and particularly student-run journals are involved, the roles of the readers become a little murkier. Often, close friends of the editor end up winning, because theirs is the work that reaches the judge. However, you should not dismiss contests out of hand, but take the following factors into consideration.

How prestigious is it?

Make sure that if you're willing to pay to enter the contest, the payoff is worth it. If it is run by a journal that publishes everyone, even if they have a well-known judge attached, you don't particularly want to be associated with that contest. In addition, contests from less established presses are not necessarily regulated in any way. The more famous the journal, the more they have to lose if their contest is discovered as being run incorrectly.

How expensive is it?

Short story and poem contests can cost up to \$50 to enter; book contests can be over \$100. The competition for contests with this big of an entry fee is less steep; however, they also tend to be associated with less established organizations that know they will have fewer submitters.

Most short story and poem contests cost less than \$20 and most full-length contests cost between \$25 and \$35.

As a general rule I never spend over \$35 to submit to a manuscript contest, and never over \$15 to submit to a short story or poetry contest. Most established and reputable contests would never charge a fee higher than the numbers I have listed.

What is the prize?

Make sure you really want to win the first prize. It is also even better if you would be happy with the second or third prize, or a runner-up status. If all those rewards look good to you, then it may be worthwhile submitting.

Do you get anything for the entry fee?

Of course it would be nice to win, but you cannot assume that you will win, or even be placed. Therefore, in the ideal world, you will receive something for just entering the contest. Some literary

journals that have contests have an option: if you pay for a subscription to the literary journal, you will be able to enter the contest for free, or vice versa. Either way, you get a year's worth of a journal you probably would want to subscribe to anyway. Some small presses give you a copy of the winning book as compensation.

What about your rights?

The guidelines to the contest should make it very clear what rights they are expecting. If it is a contest for short fiction or poetry, first publication rights if you win are par for the course. However, they should make it clear that they only take rights if you win or place in the contest. They should also make it clear how long they expect to have the sole rights to your piece. One anthology I saw recently asked for sole rights to the story for five years after publishing your work, which is a long time, particularly if you want to include that piece in a longer collection. With manuscript publishers it gets trickier, because after the contest, there is still the matter of the actual contract for your book and so on, unless they have asked for your rights automatically, and that can be a clear warning sign.

It comes down to knowing what you are comfortable with, and knowing what you are not. Also, you should always read what they are asking for in terms of rights very carefully.

Chapter 18: Anthologies – Another Publication Option

Anthologies are books that collect work by a variety of authors. Usually the glue that sticks anthologies together is theme. Most anthologies have one. The theme could be very broad and open to interpretation like “beer,” or very precise, like “Poems about meeting Bob Dylan in the 1980s.” Sometimes the subject matter is not what ties together the poems, but something about the author. There are anthologies of female-only poets, for example, and anthologies of short fiction written only by first-generation Americans.

Some anthologies include a variety of writing, including poems, flash fiction, and nonfiction. Others are only open to one kind of writing, such as flash fiction or epistolary essays.

Many major publishers put together anthologies, but so do a number of small presses. Two of the anthologies I have been published in had editors attached, but no presses initially. After the editors had gathered a certain amount of work on the subject, they found a publisher who was interested in publishing the subject matter. One of the anthologies I was published in this way was

picked up by the biggest publishing company on the planet. So don't dismiss an anthology just because it does not have a publisher attached, particularly if the editors involved are well known.

It is great to get your work published in anthologies for a variety of reasons. One is that most journals publish at least two issues a year, so even if a journal that publishes you has good distribution in bookstores or a steady following online, your work will only be featured in an issue for a small window of time. If an anthology is picked up by bookstores or libraries, it will be held and featured for a longer period of time. The first anthology I was ever published in came out over five years ago, and I still see it regularly in stores.

The second reason is that anthologies are much more likely to be in brick and mortar bookstores in the first place. Some bookstores carry literary journals, but usually only a select few. They carry a lot more anthologies. Libraries also love to buy anthologies. They are also more likely to be used as teaching material in schools.

Anthologies look great in your publication history. They show that you are not just published in literary journals, that your work is likely to be on a bookshelf somewhere in an anthology. Manuscript publishers tend to take them more seriously.

So why isn't this book all about anthologies? For one thing, far fewer anthologies are published a year than literary journals. This means that there are a lot fewer opportunities for writers to be published in anthologies. That does not mean anthologies are necessarily more competitive, though. Because anthologies are usually about one theme, they do not generally receive as many submissions as a journal that is open to writing on any theme. The more specific the theme, the fewer submissions they receive.

Also, because journals are published on a regular basis and there are thousands of them, there are a lot of different listing services for them. Because anthologies tend to be open to submissions for only a short period of time (between four months and a year, generally) and are then closed to new submissions forever, they are harder to list and harder for potential submitters to find in time. Some websites listed in the additional resources section of this book, like Duotrope and The (Submission) Grinder, routinely list upcoming anthologies.

If you check them regularly, you should see a couple of opportunities every month.

The other main issue is the theme of the anthology. Sometimes you have a poem or short story that fits the theme perfectly, sometimes

you have to write one from scratch (although unless you really like the theme, this is not the most practical option). Finding the right anthology for your work can take a fair amount of time, but it can certainly pay off.

On the first Monday of every month Authors Publish releases a listing of themed calls. Some of these are for journals, but many of them are for anthologies. If you are a subscriber, that's a great source of information.

Chapter 19: The Next Step

In the early chapters of *Submit Publish Repeat* I talk about how submitting to literary journals creates a history of publication, and how important that is for getting longer work published.

In this chapter, I outline some of the next steps you can take after publishing your work in literary journals. The great thing about publishing your work in literary journals is that the rights return to you, and literary journals and magazine editors hope that you go on to publish your poems, short stories, and nonfiction as part of a larger body of work. If you do go on to publish a book or a chapbook, there will be a page in the back, usually called “Acknowledgments” that will credit all the journals and anthologies which previously published your work.

Most publishers of poetry and short stories are not interested in publishing books if some of the poems and stories they contain were not published elsewhere earlier.

Often, parts of novels have been published in literary journals and magazines before they are published as a book. This is true of *A Prayer for Owen Meany* and *The Catcher in the Rye*, and others.

Once you have published your chapbook or full-length book, it is easy to get in contact with the journals that originally published your work. Most are eager to promote your published book or chapbook on their Facebook page and website, and many are even up for reviewing that collection. Make sure you get in touch with all of the literary journals that published your work previously right around the time your collection is released.

Because the focus of this book is very much on the process of submitting to literary journals, this chapter is more of an overview than an in-depth look at what is next. The three sections are chapbooks, poetry and short story collection publishing, and literary journals that accept novel excerpts.

Chapbooks

Chapbooks are very small books, usually no more than thirty pages in length, fifty at the most. They frequently have no spine and are often bound with staples. They have been around for a long time, at least since the 16th century, when they were associated with fiction, but now they almost always function as a vehicle for poetry.

There are a number of presses and literary journals that publish chapbooks either through open submissions or through social

contacts. Many poets self-publish chapbooks. Self-publishing your chapbook is not considered to be the same as self-publishing a book, as it does not have the same stigmas surrounding it. In the poetry world, a writer is often looked down upon if they have self-published a manuscript of their poems for sale, because it is seen as an act of vanity. Yet self-publishing a chapbook is seen as a positive thing, a way to share your poems with others.

One of the reasons this distinction is made between books and chapbooks is that all the material that you put in a chapbook can be re-published later on as part of a larger collection, as long as you publish no more than 500 copies of the chapbook. Another reason is that a chapbook is simple and cheap to make. You can almost give them away for free, and most chapbooks are sold for between \$3 and \$7.

Poets that start writing outside of an established community, like I did, do not always see the need for chapbooks. When I was in my second year of graduate studies (my fourth or fifth year as a serious writer of poems), I finally started to understand the function and purpose of chapbooks. I realized that a lot of the writers I enjoyed, I had initially discovered through their chapbooks. Many of these were purchased on a whim, before I later committed to buying a whole book (or two).

A famous poet later explained it to me as this: a chapbook is your calling card, it is a way for someone to get a much better feel for the poetry that you write, and is also a stepping stone, a way to get that much closer to publishing a full manuscript. Because most poets' first books take over a decade to get published, if you are working within the traditional system of contests and open reading periods, it is good to publish a chapbook or three while refining that manuscript and submitting it. A chapbook is a great way to get your name out.

I have published three chapbooks now, all through chapbook publishers. Two of the three publishers solicited my work. My first chapbook opened many doors for me. I ended up selling a fair number of copies and doing several important interviews because of it. A copy of my chapbook is at Poet's House in New York and another is at a local library. Those are small steps of course, but they are steps forward that have led to other greater opportunities.

My advice to most poets who are interested in publishing a chapbook is to gather up a small number of poems that are thematically linked, say between ten and thirty, and put them together as a chapbook manuscript. Then find a few chapbook publishers with open reading periods that do not charge, and submit the manuscript. If no one accepts your manuscript, you can

easily self-publish it; then you will have something to give to your friends and sell at readings.

There are also a number of chapbook publishers that publish short fiction and short nonfiction, but the majority of chapbook publishers focus on poetry.

Poetry and short fiction manuscript publishers

Novelists and nonfiction writers face a lot of hurdles on their road to publication, but these are very different than the ones faced by poets and writers of short fiction.

The major hurdle that poets and short fiction writers face is the reading and contest fees that most literary presses charge.

I always tell writers looking to publish novels or nonfiction that they should never pay a traditional publisher. I tell them a traditional publisher of any standing will not charge their writers. This is true for fiction and for nonfiction and indeed, for most genres.

Unfortunately, it is no longer true for many literary presses that focus on shorter work. This is more of a problem for poets than short story writers, but it does affect both of them.

I am not saying that there are not good, reliable, traditional literary presses, just that there are too few that don't charge a reading fee for authors without a significant track record (i.e., a book or two).

That does not mean that the publisher should charge you anything beyond the reading fee. A legitimate publisher will not. But the reading fee has become standard for manuscript contests and even for open reading periods. Reading fees usually range in price from \$25 to \$50.

If you are serious about publishing your book of poetry or short stories, the truth is that you will most likely end up paying a fee. Most publishers are open to first books and unsolicited manuscripts only through open reading periods (with a fee attached) and contests.

Most of the best publishers only select one book of poetry to be published a year by a poet without a previous book. These books are always selected via reading periods or more commonly, contests. Winning one of these big contests is a great thing but it isn't easy.

There are other options out there and there are a number of good presses that don't charge poets. New presses and very small presses often do not. If you want to take a look at some of the presses that

do not charge to read poetry manuscripts, this list of [poetry manuscript publishers](#) who don't charge, is very helpful. Some of the publishers on it are also open to short story collections.

Literary journals that accept novel excerpts

Most literary journals publish short stories, poems, nonfiction, and flash fiction, but not novel excerpts.

Finding literary journals that do publish excerpts can really be helpful when promoting your novel. If a reader stumbles across your novel excerpt in a literary journal, they may go ahead and buy your novel.

When choosing an excerpt to submit, do keep in mind that the editor and any future readers will not have any background information about that piece, so the excerpt you choose should be as self-contained as possible.

It is important to note that most of the journals have additional guidelines regarding the novel excerpt, so read them carefully.

Chapter 20: Your Publishing Journey

It is always tricky to start something new. Every time you submit to a new publication, it can feel like a big event. Initially, each acceptance is a celebration and each rejection is a reason to mourn. But things change over time.

When I first became serious about submitting my work, it would take me almost an hour to submit to one publication. Now I can submit to seven journals in one hour. It is just a matter of time. Get started, and you will become more confident over time.

My most important word of advice is to not give up. One of the tricks to not giving up is to submit to journals that are not *The Sun*. I am not saying don't submit to the most prestigious journals right away. You should. I am telling you to submit to *The Sun*, a community college publication, and a new journal that you know little about. Just make sure that you are submitting different work to each publisher.

This way you will hear from journals on a regular basis, and will most likely get acceptances in the first six months. This will feel wonderful and keep you motivated to continue submitting.

You have to remember that you never know where a piece will end up. Just because a brand new journal accepts your story doesn't mean that it ends there. Perhaps your story will be nominated for an award, or an anthology editor will read it in the journal and want it for their anthology. Both of those have happened to me.

Some writers think of publishing poems or short stories as giving them away, but you are not. The rights return to you for reprints and once your work is out in the world, much more exciting things are likely to happen.

One of my favorite things is when I receive emails from complete strangers because my poems affected them. My work has been taught all over the world. This would never happen if my work was not published widely.

Submitting can seem like an uphill battle at first, but the more you submit, the easier and more rewarding it can become. I am much happier in my personal life and much more successful in my professional life because of literary journals.

Additional Resources

This section is organized in alphabetical order. Some of the websites listed here are covered in more depth in Chapter 14.

[Creative Writers Opportunities List](#)

Creative Writers Opportunities List started out as a Yahoo group and recently converted to a blog. They regularly post new calls for journal submissions, for anthology submissions, as well as contest information, and teaching positions. You can either subscribe to the emails or regularly check the website for postings.

[Duotrope](#)

Duotrope is a comprehensive listing of literary journals and magazines that has a submission tracker and information about submission times and acceptance rates. Unfortunately, they now charge users \$5 a month or \$50 a year.

[Poets & Writers](#)

Their listings are easy to navigate, but they are not very comprehensive and more importantly do not make it clear if a journal charges writers a reading fee to submit. I do like their [in-depth search feature](#), which allows you to search by paying markets, percentage of unsolicited submissions published, and circulation, among other things.

[New Pages](#)

A website devoted to information about literary journals. They have a lot of good information, but they can be hard to navigate and are not always up-front about submission fees. They are one of the best sites to find calls for anthology submissions.

[The \(Submission\) Grinder](#)

The free alternative to Duotrope. The feedback is not at the same level and the organization leaves something to be desired, but it is free.

Glossary of Terms

These are helpful words to know in the context of writing and submitting, and are organized alphabetically.

Anthology

A published collection of poems or other pieces writing, usually on a theme.

Chapbook

A ten to thirty page collection of poetry, or less commonly, of fiction or creative nonfiction, by one author.

Editor

The person or people who run the literary journal and consider your work for publication.

First Publication Rights

Most publications will not publish work that has previously appeared in a different literary journal, print or online. Because of this, most publishers require First Rights. These can also be called First North American Serial Rights or First Serial Rights. No matter what they are called, it usually means that you are giving

that publication the exclusive rights to publish your poem or story first. After they publish the work, the rights revert to you, sometimes right away, sometimes after six months.

Any time specified over six months is not standard and that should be taken into consideration because if a literary journal retains the rights for a longer period, you may not be able to include that poem or short story as part of a longer book.

Genre

A category of artistic composition, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter. Genre can refer to poetry, prose or nonfiction in terms of form. Or it can be a subject matter classification referring to science fiction, mysteries, or various other established types of stories. If a journal says they are not interested in genre work, they are using it as a subject matter classification.

Literary journal

A magazine that publishes primarily poetry, fiction, and/or creative nonfiction.

Reader

Large journals and contests generally have volunteer readers. These individuals read a large chunk of the work submitted and decide what part of that work they are going to pass on to the editors.

Reading fee

Also known as a submission fee, it is a fee journals charge writers (usually \$3) in order for the writer's work to be considered.

Manuscript

An unpublished book-length work of fiction, nonfiction, or poetry.

Multiple submissions

Multiple submissions is when you submit work that belongs to different genres (for example, a piece of flash fiction and packet of poetry), or even to the same genre (say two short stories), to the same journal at the same time. Some journals allow multiple submissions, others do not.

Proof copy

For most journals and anthologies, the proof copy is purely digital. It is a version of the journal sent out to contributors to proofread and check for any errors. Some literary journals do this, some do not.

Self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE)

If you submit to a publisher, a contest, or a literary journal via the mail, most publishers require that you include a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) so that they can respond to your work with a rejection or acceptance letter.

Simultaneous submissions

When you submit the same piece or pieces of writing to multiple journals at the same time. Most literary journals now allow—and some even encourage—simultaneous submissions.

Solicited submissions

Submissions from authors that a publisher directly requests. Most journals publish a mix of solicited and unsolicited submissions. Editors can solicit the work of friends or of famous or emerging writers. Most of the time, when your work is solicited, it is published.

Submission deadline

The date at which a journal temporarily closes to submissions or closes to submissions of a particular theme. For anthologies, this is a permanent closing deadline, unless they extend it for any reason—say they have not got enough quality submissions.

Submission manager

An online program that handles submissions electronically. The most common one is Submittable.

Themed submissions

When a journal or anthology is only open to poems, stories, or nonfiction (or all three) along a certain topic or theme. The theme could be quite specific, such as stories by mothers of twins, or very general, such as food.

Unsolicited submissions

The bulk of submissions to most journals are unsolicited. They are the submissions sent through submission managers, post, or emails to literary journals.

About Emily Harstone

Emily Harstone is the pen name of an author whose work has been published internationally by a number of respected journals. She is a professional submissions adviser and spends much of her time researching manuscript publishers. You can follow her on Facebook here: <https://www.facebook.com/emilyharstone/>

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