

# Submit, Publish, Repeat

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

**Emily Harstone**

**2024  
Edition**

# Submit, Publish, Repeat

How to Publish Your Creative Writing  
in Literary Journals

2024 Edition

Emily Harstone  
Authors Publish

Copyright 2024 Authors Publish. All rights reserved.

Do not distribute this book without written permission from the publisher.

Questions, comments, complaints, corrections? Email  
[support@authorspublish.com](mailto:support@authorspublish.com)

## **Courses & Workshops from Authors Publish**

### [The Write, Edit, Publish Plan with Ella Peary](#)

Build the habit of writing and publishing in literary journals.

### [The Art of Writing Memoir with Marin Sardy](#)

Explore the craft of writing memoir, get extensive feedback on your writing, and personal help with the publication process.

### [The Speculative Fiction Workshop with Daisuke Shen](#)

Study the art and craft of innovative fiction, generate new work, and get professional feedback on your writing.

### [Plot Your Novel – Plot Your Scenes with John Claude Bemis](#)

Write a novel that hooks readers and keeps them turning the page.

### [View All Available Workshops](#)

## **More Books from Emily Harstone**

### [The Authors Publish Guide to Manuscript Submission](#)

### [The 2024 Guide to Manuscript Publishers](#)

## Contents

Introduction.....	7
Chapter 1: Why You Should Submit to Literary Journals.....	13
Chapter 2: How to Know Your Work is Ready to Submit.....	20
Chapter 3: The Basics of Submitting.....	26
Chapter 4: Seven Tips for Submitting Your Work.....	33
Chapter 5: How to Submit Your Poetry for Publication.....	43
Chapter 6: Print Versus Online Journals.....	49
Chapter 7: Three Things I Wish I Knew When I Was First Submitting to Literary Journals .....	56
Chapter 8: How to Choose Where to Submit Your Work.....	61
Chapter 9: Good Literary Journals for Unpublished Writers....	70
Chapter 10: Beginner Mistakes You Can Avoid Making.....	96
Chapter 11: Three Obvious Mistakes New Poets Make.....	106
Chapter 12: What to Expect After You Submit.....	110
Chapter 13: Literary Journals That Pay Writers .....	115
Chapter 14: Literary Journals That Publish Genre Writing....	127
Chapter 15: How to Find Literary Journals .....	139
Chapter 16: Paying to Submit.....	148

Chapter 17: Are Contests Worth the Fee? .....	153
Chapter 18: Anthologies – Another Publication Option.....	159
Chapter 19: Copyright and Literary Journals.....	163
Chapter 20: What to Expect After a Journal Accepts Your Work .....	169
Chapter 21: The Next Step.....	174
Chapter 22: Your Publishing Journey.....	183
Additional Resources .....	185
Glossary of Terms.....	188
About Emily Harstone .....	193
About Authors Publish.....	194

## 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 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 such as 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.

Well over 6,000 literary journals are being published at this time. Some are printed publications that have one to six issues a year;

most are electronic publications. 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. Respected journals published in English are based in 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 academic institutions; most universities produce at least one literary journal. 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. Several that started a few years ago have gained formidable reputations. It's usually easy to tell if a new journal is already respected if you are familiar with popular contemporary literary writers. If a new journal is publishing big-name authors



that fit this description, it's usually a sign that they are already respected.

Most 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 their authors through charging writers to submit. Even though we support

paying authors, we ultimately have an even bigger issue with charging writers to submit (more on this in Chapter 16). If a literary journal always charges to submit, it will not be covered in this book.

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 eighteen countries.

The first university I was hired to teach at chose to employ me based on my publication record because, 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 reason 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, almost a decade ago, that it really took off.

Since then, various editions of this book have been taught all over North America in college classes and shared by MFA programs and writing groups. It's been downloaded for free over 100,000 times and helped many writers launch their careers. It's also received a lot of unsolicited positive feedback on [Goodreads](#).

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 seven editions of the book, although each time I update the book to include more details about specific aspects of the process. I also try to note the changes that have taken place in the world of literary journals.

Among other updates, this edition of the book includes new markets, more details about submission managers, and two brand-new chapters: one on copyright and the other on what to expect when you receive an acceptance.

## 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.

It's important to note that, even if you are a novelist and the shorter work you are writing is in a completely different genre, like poetry, getting that work published still helps your query, and can help convince an agent that you are taking publishing seriously.

## 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 nonfiction writers who have received queries from agents after getting a 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 tend to read only 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 to publishers and agents.

In addition, some journals—like *The Cincinnati Review*—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.

Some presses, like Passenger Books, only allow authors who have previously published work in *Passenger Journal* to submit work to them.

### **The more you publish, the more you will publish**

The third reason that you should submit to journals is—as a 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 but 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 with journals has also led to other opportunities, such as participating in podcasts and readings. Also, many journals nominate writers 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 when I submit manuscripts to literary agents and publishers.

## **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 (which 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 was 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 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 always sure when 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 host writing groups. Writing groups are terrific because you get feedback from a variety of people all at one time.

Some journals charge extra to give editorial feedback. This can range from a small ten-dollar fee to almost a hundred dollars. If the fee is under twenty dollars, it can be worth paying. I do not think submitters should consider paying more than that.

If you're really seeking thoughtful editorial feedback, I do think this can be a helpful route to take. Unlike paying to submit, which I'm very opposed to, you are getting something here – a fresh editorial perspective. It can also be a much cheaper way to get that feedback than taking a class or paying an editor.

### **Read it out loud**

When we read work silently, we tend to read faster. Reading faster is fine in most contexts but it can be easy to miss mistakes.

I've discovered many a typo by just reading my own work out loud.

But it's even better to record yourself reading or have your computer read the work to you ([Word can do this](#)).

Listening to your words without having to say them at the same time can help you connect with the content even better, and should make what is working and what is not, clear.

### **Know yourself**

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

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

In terms of words, I sometimes use the word “lull” too often. If you know these sorts 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, it reflects poorly on the author. Make sure to edit both for mistakes and for content.

I used to encourage using editing apps here and, while I'm still not opposed to that by any means, since 2022 those apps have often been leaning more heavily on AI tools and are more likely to suggest fundamental changes that don't actually help the poem.

Also, most journals don't allow AI works to be submitted and, if your work was revised using AI, it might impact the work in a way that leads publishers to believe that it was written with the assistance of AI. This could lead to the work being rejected. I don't think this is an issue at all when using apps to make minor

changes; it's just the more significant interference I'm cautioning against.

### **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 will not read it as carefully.

With a poem or a piece of flash fiction, you have only 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 think the title of a short story or poem is not 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. Most markets respond within 3 to 6 months, but there are a few journals, most established and respected, that take a minimum of a year to respond.

There are two primary ways to submit electronically. The first is through email. 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.

This used to be the most common way to submit, but now less than a third of journals accept submissions this way. Most of the journals that do accept submissions via email are smaller.

Please note that when a journal lists its email address on its website, it is often formatted so that it is not a usable email address. They do this by doing things spelling out *at* instead of using the @ symbol, spelling out dot, or adding a space between words. For example: support at authors publish dot com when the working email address is [support@authorspublish.com](mailto:support@authorspublish.com).

They don't do this to confuse writers or send them in the wrong direction but to avoid spam, both in terms of submissions and in terms of predatory companies.

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 it 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 or when the submission status switches from received to in progress, but you can log into Submittable at any time to check on that.

The downside to Submittable 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 Submittable makes it very easy for journals to charge submitters a fee.

They also added a feature a few years ago 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 Submittable could be buying subscriptions or donating not because they want to, but because they think they must do so in order to submit.

Outside of Submittable, the second biggest submission manager is [MOKSHA](#), and it is widely used by genre journals, particularly those that publish speculative fiction, science fiction, and other genres. A few book publishers use it also. It is easy to use from a submitter’s perspective and I have rarely encountered publishers who use it that also charge submission fees.

Duotrope, which is one of the largest listing sites for journals, also has its own submission manager now, called Duosuma. However, it has not gained much traction so far and has now been active for over two years.

There are other smaller submission managers. All of them are easy to use, but a bit of a hassle, in terms of remembering passwords. More journals are also using Google forms to submit, which seems to work well for the most part.

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, you should always include a cover letter. Even if it is bland and innocuous, it is rude and unprofessional to not include one.

If you have any compliments to give the editor or the publication, please include them. Just an additional line or two that says something nice about the journal or the editor can go a long way.

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 about formatting, including 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 Roman, size 12. Prose should always be double-spaced, but poetry should be single-spaced.

Before you submit, always make sure you read the submission guidelines, 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. 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 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 seven 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 has become very common for journals to accept simultaneous submissions, though. I would say fewer 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 detail about how packets work and what goes into constructing them in Chapter 5.

### **Keep track of what you submit and where**

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

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).

**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).

If you have a Duotrope subscription, there is a built-in submission tracker that is fairly intuitive to use but, if you cancel your subscription to Duotrope, you lose access to it, so I highly encourage authors not to just rely on Duotrope for tracking.

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.

You can also use an Excel spreadsheet or Google Sheets to track submissions. Matt Bell, an established author has a very helpful Google Sheets template for tracking submissions, which you can access [here](#).

Electronic trackers are not for everyone, though. A friend of mine does all her tracking in a grade book.

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 important, when you are simultaneously submitting, if a piece gets accepted in one place, you must 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. 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 between fifty and 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, *Apples for Oscar*, 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**

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. Now having interviewed a lot of editors over the years, I can say that most do really appreciate this, especially if it's a genuine compliment, based on one's experience actually reading the journals.

Sometimes journals will request that writers include additional information, such as titles and word count as part of the cover letter. Always add that information if it is requested.

Otherwise, my cover letter is almost identical to the following 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, not because of 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](#).

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 that the subject line of your email must say "POETRY SUBMISSIONS," that is generally because they have a filter in place that is sorting emails that don't follow the guidelines into other inboxes, where they may or may not be seen.

If a journal says 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.

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

In submission guidelines, journals often offer unhelpful suggestions such as “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 actually publishes is by reading at least two 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.

If you really dislike the work published, your work is probably not the right fit for the journal, and you should not submit it there.

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; those can be hard to get a feel for.

## 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 an editor's attention and being accepted for publication.

When you submit short stories or nonfiction to a journal, it is generally straightforward: You just choose one well-edited story that you wrote and submit it. With poetry, things are a little tougher because you must 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 (generally defined as fiction under 1,000 words in length). Some journals accept submissions of up to three pieces of flash at a time. For this reason, flash fiction writers sometimes make packets as well. So even though I use the word *poem*, much of the information that follows is applicable to flash writers as well.

## **Selecting poems for packets**

Some journals accept six poems and some only accept three.

I usually gather the poems in groups of four to five, because journals that accept six are rare and it's easy to shave a packet of five poems down to three for journals that ask for only three.

Writers often ask me if it's fine to only submit one poem instead of a whole packet. Most publications are not interested in receiving just one poem. There are a few journals that ask for this specifically and only accept one poem at a time but they make this very clear in their submission guidelines.

Sometimes for submission calls on a theme, it is also fine to submit only one poem, but the editor will make that clear by saying something along the lines of: "Please submit 1-3 poems."

Outside of the previously mentioned situations, journal editors do not like poems to be submitted individually. Most journal editors I've talked to prefer to see the maximum number of poems allowed from every poet. The editors I've talked to stress that seeing a

group of poems together helps them have perspective on the poet's work, even though most journals end up just accepting one poem.

I call each grouping of poems a "submission packet." Usually, I 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 several darkly comic poems; I may group these together in a submission packet.

For me, there should be variation in each submission packet. All the poems should seem like they were written by one poet and have some overlap because of that, but there should also be some range. I wouldn't, for example, submit multiple poems about the same experience in one packet. I also wouldn't submit poems that rely on each other to make sense, unless the journal had a clear

track record of publishing multiple poems by one poet at the same time. It's easy to see if journals do this by reading past issues.

Having some 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.

Also, many poets always place the strongest poem first, in the hopes that it will make a good impression and help motivate the reader to slow down and really spend time with their work.

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.

Because of the way most larger journals work, most editors and readers won't even see the context given in the letter till after they have accepted the work for publication.

## **Choosing where to submit packets**

Once you have your submission packets ready to go, you should be ready to submit your poems to any journal. Don't re-order the packets for every journal; just make sure that your poems are formatted to fit the journals' guidelines.

I also read a few sample poems on the website before submitting because it helps me determine which packet would be the best fit for that particular journal.

I generally create one to two packets of my best poems and submit these packets to just top-tier journals—those with low acceptance rates (less than 1%).

If I submitted these packets to top-tier journals and those 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.

If none of the poems in the top-tier packet end up being accepted by top-tier journals, which is common (many accept less than 1% of what is submitted to them), I then start submitting that packet to a slightly lower tier of journals. This tier might accept 2% of submissions instead of 1%.

At some point, I might go back into a packet and revise poems, but that is generally only once I have submitted that work to at least 20 or 30 journals.

### **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 offer my opinion.

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

### **Print journals**

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

When the first edition of this book was published around eight 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 many online journals that are highly respected, and publication in them can change the course of your career.

Many print journals now 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 publications, 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.

Submitters based outside of the United States of America should be aware that many American print journals no longer send complimentary contributor copies to authors based outside of the country. Some are upfront about this limitation on their website, while others are not.

One of the big disadvantages 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 to it 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 whom 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.

In addition, print journals are more likely to charge readers a fee to consider their work. I will talk more about reading fees in Chapter 16.

### **Online journals**

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

Since they aren't usually 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, X (Twitter), or email.

Some online literary journals are very active in promoting the work they publish on social media. One of the nice things about the database [Chill Subs](#) is that they list how active publishers are on

social media. But it's also generally easy to verify this for yourself by looking at the journal's social media accounts.

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. Over the last decade, 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, a link to your work arrives in your inbox.

It is becoming more common for online journals to have submission fees, as well. Many of the most established journals, both print and digital, now 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. This can be very frustrating.

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. I would not say either form of publication is perfect or more ideal, but I will say that my parents have two whole shelves of a very nice bookcase devoted to my past publications.

## 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. The following are things I wish I had known 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 actually mean. By reading these 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 because what they said they wanted and what they actually wanted were two different things.

Another example is that many journals ask you to submit only 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 fine 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.

**There is so much to be gained by being on both sides of a desk**

Before I started seriously submitting, I was a literary journal reader and editor. Once I started submitting, I focused only on submitting work and not helping support journals as a reader, an editor, or in other capacities.

Only recently did I start to realize the real value of staying on both sides of the desk, as an editor of one journal and a submitter to others.

I started teaching a class where we have four poets visit every session. Two come primarily as editors and the other two as publishing poets. I love teaching this class because it gives me an excuse to reach out to editors of journals I love and poets I admire. I also get to pay them for their visits.

The poets I ask to visit the class generally have one or two books out, and a lot of great journal publications. I generally only know them through their published work. It turns out that these poets also tend to be readers or editors for other journals. All of them

have said that being an editor and a reader has helped them grow as a submitting poet over a long period of time.

### **One shouldn't take rejections seriously**

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, you will consume a lot of mental energy.

Because I started out as a reader and then an editor for a respected literary journal, I already understood how rejection worked before I started submitting in earnest. In my role as an editor, I had accepted seven poems out of the over 1,000 submitted. When I was reading submissions, I was sometimes just so overwhelmed I was not able to give the poem the amount of time or, more important, the mental energy it deserved. That is not even taking my personal preferences as a reader into consideration. 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.

It also took me a long time to discover that tiered rejections were a common practice. A tiered rejection is different than a personal rejection in that is standard and doesn't refer to your work directly or in detail, but it can still be meant to encourage writers the journal wants to resubmit.

At [Rejection Wiki](#) writers share standard and tiered rejections from various well-known journals. Some journals send out very nice standardized rejections to everyone, so it can be confusing. Rejection Wiki helps clarify whether a journal is just very encouraging to everyone or the editor wants a specific writer to be encouraged by their tiered response.

If you are a more sensitive writer, I really encourage you to read [this thoughtful piece](#) by Ananda-mayi Dasi.

## Chapter 8: How to Choose Where to Submit Your Work

Choosing where to submit is one of the trickiest propositions for a writer. I know some people who submit their work to a great variety of publications, others who submit only to the most prestigious, and some who submit only to journals they like. Ultimately, 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 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—that 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)
- 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.

### **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.

Two websites 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 the popular ones do (particularly on Duotrope).

Some journals are notoriously hard to get into and others are very easy to get into. I talk about this in more detail and use examples in Chapter 9.

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.

I personally have never submitted to a journal that is known for publishing most of what they receive. That said, an established poet I interviewed talked about how publication in really approachable journals is what kept her writing. She no longer lists



any of these journals in her bio, but they still were important stepping stones towards finding her way as a poet and she in no way regrets the experience of publishing there.

### **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, those 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 of the 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; Chapter 16 is devoted to reading fees, so I delve into the issue in more depth there.

### **How active are they on social media?**

I'm someone who personally doesn't care much for social media, in terms of using it myself; but, even if you don't use social media at all, it's still helpful to publish your work in journals that are active on it, especially if they're only electronic.

It's always helpful to go to Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram and verify how active they are. You can get a good feeling for this, not just in terms of how many followers they have, but how many comments most posts receive and how frequently they post.

Journals that are good at using social media to promote their work can help an author and their work reach a much larger audience, without that author having to put in the heavy lifting themselves.

[Chill Subs](#), a good resource for submitting authors, lists the number of Twitter followers for every journal they list that is active on Twitter, and this is really helpful. Also, if the journal is active on any form of social media, they include that fact on the journal's main listing page.

### **Does the journal nominate for awards?**

Many journals nominate work they publish for the two major awards that works published in literary journals are eligible for: [The Pushcart Prize](#) and [The Best of the Net](#). Nominating for these awards makes it clear that the literary journal is aware of the larger literary ecosystem.

In my experience, nominations for either of these awards give the writer a sense of credibility and acceptance.

But, while many authors are nominated for both of these prizes (I've been nominated multiple times for both), it's very rare for someone to win either.

The Pushcart is particularly bad about this. There are many journals that have nominated their work for a decade that have never had any work win.

Each year the writer Clifford Garstang puts together a list he calls “The Literary Magazine Ranking.” You can see this overview of the 2023 list [here](#). As he says on his website “these rankings are based solely on the number of Pushcart Prizes and Pushcart Special Mentions the magazines have received over the past ten-year period.”

If you want to know which journals nominate work that actually goes on to win, you can find out. Not only are the journals that nominated winners hard to get into but, more significantly, well over half of them charge for submissions. Also, Garstang still lists defunct publications, like *Glimmer Train* (which stopped publishing in 2019), because the listing takes the past decade into consideration

There are other awards out there, though. These include literary journal-specific awards – some journals award a prize for their favorite poem of an issue. There are also regional prizes and other smaller award-based anthologies usually organized by genre. These are more realistic to win.

I always see it as a good sign if a journal nominates the work it publishes for awards, but I don’t disqualify journals that don’t. If

I'm on the fence about submitting to a particular journal, I'll verify that they nominate for awards, and then submit.

**Do they accept simultaneous submissions?**

Most journals accept simultaneous submissions, as long as you agree to withdraw your work if another journal else accepts it first.

A few journals don't allow simultaneous submissions. I generally steer clear of submitting to these journals, but many writers just ignore this part of the guidelines. This can work out, but only if they don't get caught in the lie, and I personally don't think it's worth the risk.

## Chapter 9: Good Literary Journals for Unpublished Writers

There are not any hard or fast rules about 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.

It is very important that you figure out what your goal is before you start submitting. What are you looking for when you publish? Are you just interested in building up a long backlist of journals, or is it more important that you place your work in a journal that's very prestigious?

I do think that it's good to start with a few journals with fast response times, just to get the ball rolling.

I have included a number of new literary journals that show promise. New journals are much more likely to take a chance on new writers, and they tend to be more supportive of the writers they publish.

Also listed below are journals that accept most of what they receive, and journals with good reputations.

### **Journals that accept a lot of what they receive**

Some journals accept a lot more submissions than others. Acceptance rates change all the time, so realize that over time these journals may become harder to get into.

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](#), and from feedback from students, subscribers, and editors.

I will add that, during the pandemic, Duotrope, which still has the most data, seems to have become less reliable in terms of the quality of that data, particularly in the last year, so I am relying more on additional sources.

If you are just starting to submit your work to literary journals, or perhaps you just want to avoid rejection, this list is for you. If you are an editor of a journal with a high acceptance rate, please feel encouraged to send me an email at [support@authorspublish.com](mailto:support@authorspublish.com).

At the time of this update, all the publishers on this list had a 25% acceptance rate or higher.



### **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 30% of what is submitted to them.

### **Witcraft**

A journal currently focused on publishing brief, humorous, and engaging prose. They have an acceptance rate of about 30%.

### **Children, Churches and Daddies**

They bill themselves as "The UN-religious, NON-family oriented literary and art magazine." They publish poetry, prose, and artwork 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, fiction, and creative nonfiction online.

### **Writing in a Woman'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 80%.

### **Last Leaves Magazine**

A journal that publishes poetry and art. They accept over 60% of submissions

### **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.

### **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." They have two reading periods a year. They are not open to submissions at this time but will reopen in July.

### **The New Verse News**

A journal that publishes politically progressive poetry on current events and topical issues on a daily basis. Their acceptance rate is

around 40%

### **The Last Girls Club**

They only accept submissions from writers 18+. They publish nonfiction, poetry, and fiction. They have rotating submission windows and often have themed calls. They largely publish horror from a feminist perspective and are a paying market. Please follow their guidelines carefully before submitting. If they hit submission quotas they will close to submissions early.

### **Creepy Podcast**

A paying market that publishes horror in an audio format. They accept about 30% of what they receive.

### **101 Words**

They publish flash fiction stories that are exactly 101 words in length. They publish about 30% of what they receive.

### **Green Ink Poetry**

This UK-based electronic publisher is open to submissions till the 15th of October on the theme of “Forage.” They accept about 60% of what is submitted to them.

### **Instant Noodles**

The one journal on this list that has a limited demographic, they are only open to submissions from adults that are 40 or older. Each issue has a theme. They have around a 50% acceptance rate.

### **Star\*Line**

Star\*Line is the official print journal of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association. They publish a wide variety of poems within these two genres.

### **Book of Matches**

An online journal with great covers, they publish fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and works in translation.

### **Panoply**

They publish a wide variety of creative work and allow multi-genre submissions. They accept around 30% of what they receive.

### **Cosmic Daffodil**

They publish flash fiction and nonfiction as well as poetry and art.

### **Dark Horses**

A magazine for "weird fiction." Do not submit work that is not "weird fiction" (which they define in detail on their site). They

only send out acceptances. If you haven't heard from them in 90 days, assume rejection. They accept over half of their submissions.

### **Nixes Mate Review**

A journal that publishes short and micro-fiction as well as poetry and creative nonfiction. They accept about 50% of submissions.

### **The Last Stanza Poetry Journal**

This print poetry journal publishes about 40% of the submissions they receive. They also pay \$100 for one of the accepted poems. That is the only payment they make. They do not give out contributor copies, so if that is a dealbreaker for you, don't submit. They do have lovely covers.

### **Bewildering Stories**

An e-zine devoted to experimental and speculative writing., based in Canada. They accept about 50%.

### **Bullet Points**

They publish speculative military fiction that is sensitive to the complexity and tragedy of warfare. They accept around 25% of submissions

### **FlashFlood Fiction**

They are only open for submissions for one week a year and they

accept about 30% of what they receive. They are sponsored by National Flash Fiction Day (in the UK).

### **The most established and respected journals**

These journals are very hard to get into. They are among the most prestigious journals out there.

However, there is no reason not to start out submitting to these journals (as long as you are not submitting your work only there, and as long as you feel that your work is good). 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 necessarily have to send your work to the most approachable ones. Most literary journals fall somewhere between 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.

A lot of prestigious journals did not make it onto 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. They used to have more reliable response times, but this is no longer the case.

### **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.

### **Rattle**

This prestigious print magazine also has a wonderful 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 postal submissions, and via Submittable, depending on the genre and the month. 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.

### **Harper's Magazine**

Harper's considers unsolicited fiction submissions and queries for nonfiction. It is the second-oldest continuously published monthly magazine in the U.S. All submissions must be made via the mail.

### **The Cincinnati Review**

This respected literary journal publishes some of the most established writers, and on their pages appear a wide range of nonfiction, fiction, drama, and poetry. They are a paying market, and they have limited submission windows except for the micro flash series.



### **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 to authors varies. They are currently closed to submissions.

### **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 who have become part of the establishment.

### **The Kenyon Review**

They publish short fiction, essays, poetry, plays, excerpts, and translations of poetry and short prose. When you submit to their

print journal, you are also submitting to their online magazine; both have a large readership.

### [A Public Space](#)

They publish great writing and work, everything from novellas to excerpts. They are respected, modern, and compelling. They have an open reading period once a year. They are currently closed to submissions.

### [AGNI](#)

This is a wonderful print journal that publishes fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Known for publishing "important new writers early in their careers" (PEN), six contributors have gone on to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. They charge for electronic submissions, but postal submissions are free. Please read the guidelines carefully because there are different submission periods for mailed and online submissions.

### [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 three journals. They have published many famous poets and writers, including Haruki Murakami. They have very slow response times.

### [Iowa Review](#)

One of the most respected print journals charges for electronic submissions but allows postal submissions for free during their open submission period.

### [The Bennington Review](#)

Published twice a year in print, this beautiful literary journal publishes both established and new authors. They publish fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and cross-genre work.

### [The Malahat Review](#)

The Malahat Review was established in 1967 and is one of Canada's leading literary journals. They publish contemporary Canadian and international works of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. They are open to submissions from international writers sometimes, and Canadian writers always.

### **Sixth Finch**

Sixth Finch is an online journal of poetry and art. Poems from Sixth Finch have appeared in The Best American Poetry, The Pushcart Prize, and Best of the Net.

### **The Cincinnati Review**

This respected print journal has three open reading periods a year for its print journal and publishes the work of emerging and established writers.

### **Blue Earth Review**

This wonderful journal publishes a variety of creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry and is funded by Minnesota State University.

### **Epoch**

Epoch has been in print since 1947 and is edited by students and faculty of the creative writing MFA program at Cornell. They have a free few electronic submission opportunities a year but have a much larger free submission window for postal submissions.

### **Beloit Poetry Journal**

A very respected poetry journal.

### [Puerto del Sol](#)

This established literary journal has been active for over half a century and published a good mix of emerging and established writers and artists.

### **Journals with fast response times**

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

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

All of these journals respond to submissions within a month. The response time data is based on information from [Duotrope](#) and [The \(Submission\) Grinder](#).

Most, but not all, of them are open for submissions now.

### [Poets Respond - Rattle](#)

As part of this series, Rattle publishes a poem "written within the last week about a public event that occurred within the last

week.” They respond to all submissions within two days and the poem is published online.

### **Witcraft**

They focus on publishing fiction, nonfiction, and poems that are “brief, humorous and engaging, with the emphasis on wit, word play, absurdity and inspired nonsense.” They respond to submissions within two days.

### **The Dark Magazine**

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

### **The Shore**

An online poetry journal that responds to submissions within two weeks.

### **Eunoia Review**

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

### **Ghost Parachute**

This flash fiction publisher tries to respond to all submissions within two weeks.

### **Front Porch Review**

A long-running eMagazine that publishes fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. 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, they respond within three weeks.

### **Radar Poetry**

Radar Poetry is a wonderful electronic poetry journal that responds within three weeks to submissions. They have a cap for free submissions.

### **Flash Frog**

A new fast-responding flash journal that pays.

### **Milk Candy Review**

An ePublisher of beautifully weird flash fiction up to 750 words in length.

### **Fusion Fragment**

They publish science fiction and literary fiction with science fiction elements. They allow some reprints. They respond within a week.

### **SmokeLong Quarterly**

An established publisher of flash fiction that responds to most submissions within two weeks.

### **ONE ART**

A poetry journal that strives to respond to submissions within a week. Please wait at least two months before submitting again.

### **Radon Journal**

Radon welcomes short story and poetry submissions containing elements of anarchism, transhumanism, dystopia, and/or science fiction. They pay all contributors and try to respond to all submissions within two to four weeks.

### **Star\*line**

The official journal of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association, it responds to most submissions within two weeks.

### **Neologism Poetry**

This literary journal publishes a wide range of creative poetics. Do not submit again within the same month unless explicitly instructed to do so.

### **Third Wednesday Magazine**

They publish short fiction and poetry and try to respond to most



submissions within a week.

### **The Inflectionist Review**

The editors particularly like shorter poems, but they accept longer poems as well. They respond within a month.

### **Pithead Chapel**

An online journal that publishes fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry. They have a monthly submission cap and try to respond within three weeks.

### **Intrepidus Ink**

They respond within a week but are looking for very specific stories, ones that "explore intrepid culture: our stories feature four elements in every story: danger, struggle, emotion, and OVERCOMING." They have specific submission guidelines that you must follow.

### **FlashFlood**

FlashFlood is National Flash Fiction Day's curated online journal. They only have one reading period a year. They respond to all submissions within two days.

### **trampset**

trampset publishes fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, and they try to

respond to all submissions within two weeks.

### **The Penn Review**

This established literary journal responds to most submissions within three weeks

### **Wildness**

A respected journal that mostly publishes poetry; they respond to most submissions within a month.

### **Scapegoat Review**

They publish poetry, flash fiction, and visual art and respond to most submissions in two weeks.

## **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

S. Kalekar put together a great longer list in February, which you can read [here](#). There is a tiny bit of overlap in the lists.

### **100-Foot Crow**

This new speculative journal publishes only drabbles, which is to say they are interested in stories that are exactly 100 words in length. They only publish science fiction and fantasy, within the speculative umbrella. They pay 8 cents a word, which is to say, eight dollars per story. You can submit two stories per submission period.

### **pictura journal**

They don't have any work up on their website yet, but I really like how they pitch themselves as a journal. They say they are seeking "work that offers a vivid snapshot of the writer's world — we want to see cracks in the plaster, last night's empties on the coffee table, the shivering birch just outside the kitchen window. We want to see the mundane rendered with clarity & quiet moments given room to breathe." As part of their submission guidelines, they list work, both poetry and prose, that they enjoy, so that helps give additional context. They will be paying token amounts.

### **The Orange & Bee**

The Orange & Bee focuses on publishing "short stories, poems,

essays, and reviews that explore, expand on, and subvert the rich traditions of international folklore, including fairy tales, fables, myths, and legends.” They “also publish traditional tales accompanied by annotations, discussion questions, and writing prompts.” They are based on Substack. I really like some of the writing they have featured in their first eight months. They are a paying market.

### **No Country**

This magazine asks for submissions from “poets at the intersection of art and science, focusing on works that blend the precision of scientific and technical language with the boundless possibilities of poetry.” I really like their narrow approach, and thought the two pieces they had published so far were intriguing. Assume rejection if you have not heard from them in 3 weeks.

### **Concord Ridge**

This new biannual poetry broadsheet is based in the Hudson Valley. You can see their sample issue [here](#), not to get a feel for what they are looking for but to see what the layout will be like. Because of the unusual formatting, they say, “Poems submitted to Concord Ridge should be a maximum of 40 lines, including stanza breaks, and each line should not exceed more than 60 characters.” They also publish art and photography. They pay a small

honorarium and send each contributor two copies. Their website is simple and easy to navigate and has a very charming illustration.

### **The Wild Umbrella**

This Irish electronic journal was founded in 2023. They publish one featured author a week. One story at a time for prose authors, and usually three poems at a time for poets. They also regularly publish author interviews alongside the nonfiction and poetry that they publish. They haven't done the same for fiction so far. The website is well designed and easy to use. They pay €10 per poem and €25 per prose piece. They nominate for the Pushcart Prize and the Best of the Net. They also try to offer personal feedback. They are currently closed to submissions.

### **Blanket Gravity Magazine**

Blanket Gravity Magazine is a journal for fiction, creative nonfiction, and visual art that is focused on publishing writing and art that explores mental health and/or emotional life. They say elsewhere on their site that they are publishing "art to struggle to." They are a paying market that is paying \$40 per accepted piece. They have yet to publish an issue, but they have a pretty intriguing masthead.

### **Small World City**

This online magazine is based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. They publish prose and poetry with varying guidelines. They say they are looking for "the strange, the irreverent, the niche, the stories that eschew reality. Ghosts, freaks, punks, outcasts, gangsters, martians, manhunters, detectives, astronauts, and argonauts." They have published three issues so far, so it is easy to get a feel for what they publish.

### **Gooseberry Pie**

Gooseberry Pie calls themselves the "home of the six-sentence story." They only publish micro-fiction that is less than 400 words (not including the title) in length, and made up of six sentences, no more, no less. They say: "We like stories that are like gooseberry pie: Tart, Messy, and Satisfying. We have a weakness for quirky characters and unusual settings. We're not so crazy about joke endings." They accept up to two stories at a time.

## 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 they 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.

Even now, when I teach this book as a course, I often receive manuscript query letters to give feedback on rather than short literary journal-appropriate cover letters.



## **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 pieces 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 you 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 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 of 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 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 have just one person. Some journals, particularly those 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 does 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. If you are not following the guidelines your work may not be seen by another person at all.

### **Simultaneously submitting to journals that ask you to exclusively submit to them**

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 U.S. 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.

I also need to stress that since the COVID pandemic started in 2020, rude emails have become more common and some journals have stated that they have closed to submissions because of the influx of emails containing vitriol that they received.

### **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 the 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 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 it 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 accept only 0% to 3% of what is submitted, according to Duotrope. All the journals on the list of respected publishers are in this tier.

After that, I tier journals in a 4-8% 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 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 mistake 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 those automatically capitalized words are distracting. They don't serve the poem and are not what 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, it is important to stress that sometimes the right place for a line break is after punctuation, just as long as you are not doing it at the end of every line.

[This article](#) is a good starting place for 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 came 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, and 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.

Most journals do not have restrictions on the number of times you can submit per year, but some do and they make that clear as part of their submission guidelines.

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 journal's submission guidelines. Often their ideal response times are mentioned there. Sometimes they will update this page if they are running behind schedule. If no information about response times is 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, submit to that journal again.

For a long time, I was unaware of tiered rejections. 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 they finally 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 a 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, here 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.

Please note that if you do not have a PayPal account, some of these journals will not be able to pay you. Most presses try to make this clear on their website.

### **Brilliant Flash Fiction**

This quarterly flash fiction publication pays \$20 via PayPal.

### **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.

### **Interpret**

Interpret's editor is a professional translator of French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian. Writers in these languages are not required to supply an English translation. They publish poetry and short stories and pay contributing authors an honorarium plus a contributor copy.

### **Write or Die Mag**

They have published interesting pieces about writing and publishing, as well as more general essays, but are now getting into fiction, and are paying \$200 for short stories (which will be published alongside an interview and custom artwork). You can learn more about the submissions [here](#).

### **Centaur Lit**

They publish experimental writing that defies genre definition. They pay \$20 per piece.

### **Cornice**

They publish poetry and fiction that aligns with the editors' preferences. They make these preferences clear on their website so read their guidelines carefully. They pay \$40.

### **Dreams & Nightmares**

They primarily publish poetry, but also publish some short fiction, usually within the SF and fantasy genre. They are a print publication and offer contributor copies along with a token amount.

### **Brink**

Brink has two reading periods a year, in January and July. They accept a variety of creative work from nonfiction to fiction, from

poetry to translation, but are most interested in hybrid work. They pay between \$25 and \$100. This is a print magazine.

### **The Bombay Literary Magazine**

This respected literary journal pays an honorarium of ₹5,000 (approx. \$61 or €51) for a contribution.

### **Cake Zine**

An independent print magazine that accepts based on pitches and publishes a wide range of work including nonfiction, poetry, and fiction. Each issue has a theme. They pay between \$125 and \$300.

### **Big Wing Review**

This nature-focused magazine pays \$5-10 for pieces.

### **The Ampersand Review**

The literary magazine, published by Sheridan College's Honours Bachelor of Creative Writing & Publishing program, prioritizes Canadian submissions while being open to submissions of authors from all backgrounds. They pay between CAD50 and CAD100 per piece and publish poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, essays, and reviews.

### **Salamander**

Salamander, an established and long-running print journal, pays contributors for poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and flash, although they do not disclose how much.

### **The Fiddlehead**

An established and respected Canadian print journal. They have two open reading periods. One is for Canadians only and runs from the 1st of January through the 31st of March. The other is open to all submissions and runs from September 15th through the 30th of November. They pay CAD65 per published page plus two contributor copies.

### **Nashville Review**

This respected paying market is open to fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and translation submissions in August and January. They accept art and comics year-round.

### **The Malahat Review**

The Malahat Review is an established and respected print magazine based in Canada. They mostly publish work by Canadian writers but are open to international writers during certain months. Their detailed schedule is on their website. They purchase first-world serial rights and, upon acceptance, pay CAD70 per published page, plus a one-year subscription.

### **Only Poems**

A new publication that focuses on publishing one poet per week as well as featuring one poet per month. They have published some very established writers including Bob Hicok and Denise Duhamel. They pay \$55 for poets of the week and \$11 for the poem of the month. They are open to fee-free submissions during the first seven days of every month.

### **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.

### **Eye to the Telescope**

Eye to the Telescope is an established online journal that focuses on publishing speculative poetry. They pay authors 4¢ per word, rounded up to the nearest dollar. They pay a minimum of \$4 per poem and a maximum of \$25. They usually have themed issues.

### **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 10 to 15 pieces.

### **THEMA**

A literary journal that pays \$25 for short stories and \$10 for flash fiction and poetry. They usually have themed submission calls; follow their guidelines carefully. They only accept postal submissions from U.S.-based writers and emailed submissions from writers elsewhere.

### **The Threepenny Review**

This established literary journal publishes poetry and prose and they pay very well.

### **Poetry Magazine**

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

### **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. They post previous stats, including payouts, [here](#).

### **AGNI**

This is a respected and established journal published by Boston University. They are open to submissions from September 1st through May 31st. They charge for electronic submissions, but you can submit via post for free.

### **Bennington Review**

Bennington Review publishes two print issues a year and they pay their writers. Prose writers receive up to \$250, poetry writers are paid \$25 per poem.

### **CŌNFINGŌ MAGAZINE**

CŌNFINGŌ publishes new short fiction, poetry, and art from around the world. The journal is a beautiful print-only magazine. They pay £30 to all contributors. If you do not hear from them in 90 days, assume your work is rejected.

### One Story

One Story publishes 12 short stories 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.

### 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 here 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.

### The Deadlands

A paying speculative fiction market. They accept reprints. They are mainly looking for works that explore death, dying, grief, loss, Death personified, the afterlife/the underworld, etc. They pay \$0.10 per word for short fiction up to 5,000 words, \$100 per essay, and \$50 per poem.

### **The Forge**

They pay \$100 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.

### **The Paris Review**

This is a very respected print journal and they do not disclose the amount they pay, they only say that they do pay. They have limited submission windows via Submittable, and also accept work by post during their submission periods.

### **The Ex-Puritan**

This renamed Canadian literary journal publishes and pays for poetry and prose.

### **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 and 22. They pay them \$30 per piece and \$75 for cover art.

### **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. Asylum seekers get a £100 gift card.

### **The Cafe Irreal**

A journal focused on publishing unusual fiction, it pays token amounts. They do not accept simultaneous submissions.

### **Flash Frog**

A paying market for flash fiction.

### **Menagerie**

Menagerie publishes fiction, essays, and poems, and is a paying market.

### **The Drift**

A respected magazine focused on culture and politics, they accept a wide variety of nonfiction, as well as some fiction and poetry. They pay well.

### **West Branch**

This respected print literary journal is open to unsolicited work between August 1st and April 1st. They pay \$100 to poets whose work is accepted, and \$.10/word for prose with a maximum payment of \$200.

### **Riddle Fence**

This Newfoundland- and Labrador-based journal of arts and culture, published four times yearly, is open to international submissions and pays \$50 per published page.

### **The Mantelpiece**

This Iceland-based journal is open to unsolicited submissions of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry and they pay professional rates.

## 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 for 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 specialize, not those that are open to every genre in the book.

Not all 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, most of these pay.

### **Old Moon Quarterly**

A paying journal that publishes “weird sword-and-sorcery fiction set in a historical paranormal setting or a secondary-world, with a focus on well-rounded characters driving strange action.”

### **Sci-fi Lamppoon**

They publish fantasy, sci-fi, and horror-themed humor. They publish both flash (under 1000 words) and short fiction (7500 words, MAX). They are also open to high-res art, lampoon classifieds, and ads. They pay a token \$5 per accepted piece.

### **New Myths**

A paying market that publishes a range of science fiction and fantasy.

### **Bone Parade**

They publish previously published works of magical realism, fabulism, and speculative fiction.



### **Fanatical**

Fanatical is a magazine of sci-fi and fantasy stories based on tabletop games.

### **The Five-Two**

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

### **Voyage**

A literary journal that focuses on publishing a wide range of young adult fiction and nonfiction.

### **Escape Pod**

This is an audio science fiction journal that pays. It is run by Escape Artists.

### **PodCastle**

This is a fantasy audio journal that pays. It is run by Escape Artists.

### **PseudoPod**

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

### **Cast of Wonders**

This young adult short fiction market, also run by Escape Artists,

publishes flash fiction and short stories up to 6,000 words in length. They publish primarily science fiction, fantasy, and horror.

### **CatsCast**

CatsCast publishes speculative cat stories on a monthly basis and they are a paying market, run by Escape Artists.

### **Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine**

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

### **The Fantastic Other**

They pay a token amount for work of fantasy, and science fiction, sometimes around a theme.

### **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.

### [Cowboy Jamboree](#)

They publish short fiction and flash fiction in the Western genre, though not traditional Western – they describe themselves as a “Grit-lit magazine focused on the rural working class and revisionist Western writing.” They are reading for three themed issues, inspired by Bob Dylan, Hank Williams, and Larry McMurtry.

### [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 a very low acceptance rate, pay professional rates, and, most important, they publish very good stories in the science fiction and fantasy genre. They also accept poetry and nonfiction.

### **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 good 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 its authors.

### **Clarkesworld Magazine**

They publish science fiction and fantasy works in print and

eMagazine editions. They are highly respected and they pay good rates.

### [Augur Magazine](#)

They want “dream-touched realism, slipstream, fabulism, magical realism and, for lack of a better descriptor, ‘literary’ speculative fiction.” They pay professional rates. They publish authors from all backgrounds but prioritize submissions by writers belonging to historically underrepresented groups. For funding reasons, they focus primarily on publishing work by Canadian authors. They are open for a themed issue now, Fancy & Fantasy.

### [Andromeda Spaceways](#)

They accept science fiction, fantasy, and supernatural horror works up to 10,000 words in length (subscribers and NZ/Australian writers can submit longer). They accept poetry and nonfiction works as well. They pay all their authors.

### [Aphelion Webzine](#)

Aphelion Webzine publishes science fiction, fantasy, and horror.

### [Mystery Magazine](#)

This is an online magazine that publishes mystery stories on a

monthly basis. Avoid excessive profanity or violence. They are a paying market. They were formerly called Mystery Weekly.

### **Tell Tale**

They publish fantasy and sci-fi short stories in an audio format.

### **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. They're reading submissions on the theme of trauma.

### **Another Realm**

This free publication focuses on science fiction, fantasy, and horror.

### **Star\*Line**

The official print journal of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association was established in 1978. A paying market that focuses on publishing speculative poetry and nonfiction articles.

### **Dark Fire**

An online horror magazine, geared towards adults.

### **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.

### **Grim & Gilded**

They are looking for stories and poetry steeped in the genres of horror, fantasy, and dark fiction. They read submissions year-round.

### **Radon Journal**

Radon welcomes short story and poetry submissions containing elements of anarchism, transhumanism, dystopia, and/or science fiction. They pay all contributors and try to respond to all submissions within two to four weeks.

### **Electric Spec**

They pay to publish speculative short stories.

### **Grand Dame Literary**

They publish fiction and memoir by women writers of any age. They publish general literary fiction as well as genre work including upmarket women’s fiction, romance, and thrillers.

### **The Future Fire**

They publish speculative short stories and poetry. They pay token rates.

### **The Fairy Tale Review**

They publish prose, poetry, art, nonfiction, drama, and comics, that pertain to or are inspired by fairy tales. They pay.

### **Three Crows Magazine**

They publish dark and weird fantasy, horror, and sci-fi, with complex characters making morally ambiguous decisions. They pay.

### **Teleport Magazine**

They publish short fiction, reviews, and articles in the genres of fantasy, science fiction, and horror.

### **Lost Colony**

This new literary journal focuses on publishing mid-length (between 10,000 and 25,000 words) science fiction and fantasy. They pay \$50 per piece.

### **Uncanny Magazine**

They publish and pay for science fiction and fantasy, prose and poetry, including novellas.



### **Dark Dispatch**

A pop culture site devoted to all things dark: dark fantasy, science fiction, horror, and crime. They do not read work submitted outside of reading periods. They pay.

### **Short-Story.Me**

They publish strong genre fiction including crime, fantasy, mystery, romance, science fiction, and horror.

### **Delicate Friend**

Delicate Friend is an adult (18+) arts and literary magazine highlighting romance, yearning, eroticism, and other forms of desire and intimacy. Please visit their website only if you are an adult.

### **Creepy**

A respected horror podcast.

### **Crow & Cross Keys**

A literary journal focused on publishing fiction, poetry, and flash fiction with a speculative bent.

### **The Deadlands**

A paying speculative fiction market. They accept reprints. They are mainly looking for works that explore death, dying, grief, loss, Death personified, the afterlife/the underworld, etc. They

Emily Harstone

pay \$0.10 per word for short fiction up to 5,000 words, and \$50 per poem.

## 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 that we send out on Mondays. In our longer reviews, we include submission guideline details, acceptance rates, and payment information.

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

### Duotrope

Duotrope lists almost all the journals that are open to free submissions. They also list journals that charge 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 tells you 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 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 \$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 fee and do not regret it, but honestly, it depends on 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 U.S., 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 Duotrope decrease. Fewer users are

inputting information and many markets are poorly covered in terms of response statistics.

They've also expanded into other areas, including agent listings and having their own submission tracker, and their attention feels spread thin. None of the aspects of the site are receiving the amount of attention they deserve.

### [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. It does seem like over the last five years, genre writers have started to really actively use it and submit reports. So,

while most literary journals do not have useful data attached to them on the site, most genre journals are covered in detail.

It's also important to note that if a journal doesn't honor contracts or behaves badly in some other known way they list that information, which is helpful.

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 outside the U.S. 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 say 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 that 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 newer 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.

You can search by magazine or contributor name, response time, and vibe, and whether they are open for submissions and offer expedited submissions (mostly for a fee or to historically excluded communities). It also allows writers to see only 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 who previously published with them. I'm also grateful that they make it clear if they are available in print and whether examples of the work they've published are online.

When they initially launched they were extremely intuitive and easy to use, and over the years they've continued to expand into small presses and contests and other markets. The site has gotten more unwieldy over time and you now have to pay a fee to access certain information. They also have a Sub Club option that has a

payment attached, but they curate some really excellent lists as part of this.

## Chapter 16: Paying to Submit

When I first started submitting over 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 eight 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 overall, has still not been reached. You can still submit to the majority of journals for free. I am hoping it stays that way, but I am not assuming that it will. We have reached the tipping point in terms of the more established journals. Well 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 have free submission options.

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

Even though I no longer submit to *The Iowa Review* 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 additional factor 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.

There has also been an increasing issue where certain journals charge for unsolicited submissions but don't read them for years, and sometimes don't even have the infrastructure in place to read them. You can learn more about one of those journals [here](#).

Ultimately, you will have to make up your own mind 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 positive developments is that some journals offer feedback to submitters for between \$10 and \$20. 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 afford it.



## Chapter 17: Are Contests Worth the Fee?

As an author, editor, professional submitter, and poet, I talk 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, although it is very much common practice for the judges to read no more than ten pieces, and sometimes as few as three.

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 several 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.

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 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. That means that 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 for 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 a 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 well over a decade 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.

Anthologies also generally have a lot slower turnaround time. One of the anthologies in my work was published in was released three years later than anticipated because they switched presses.

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: Copyright and Literary Journals

When I first started submitting this was a clear-cut issue, and not one that was spoken about very much.

Journals asked for work that had not been previously published in books or other literary journals.

They would ask for first serial rights (the rights to be the first publisher of the work), or First North American Serial Rights (FNASR), which would grant them the rights to publish the work for the first time in North America only. Either way, the rights reverted to the author, sometimes with a 3- to 6-month waiting period built into the contract. If you want to learn more about copyright laws in general, I very much encourage you to read the [Copyright Information for Writers section](#) of Poets & Writers.

Even if a publication doesn't ask for either FNASR or first serial rights explicitly, just by publishing one's work, they receive this right and anywhere else you submit the same work to afterward should be open to reprints.

What has really changed with the increasing presence of social media and writers being more active online, in general, is how

journals define publication. Before they were just worried about whether the work had appeared in a different journal or a book before.

It still depends on the individual journal, but now most journals only want work that has not been previously published online in most capacities. For most journals, this just means you shouldn't have shared it on any social media platforms including but not limited to Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, or on a personal blog.

Most journals are not concerned with work that is published in private spaces, like a password-protected group blog for workshopping or a forum that is members-only. Some publications have even stricter perimeters, which Craig Westmore writes about [here](#).

As part of the article, Westmore shares the following: “Neil Clarke (of *Clarkesworld*) makes it clear that if a site allows anyone to join then it would be viewed as a ‘publicly available website’ and you would be at risk of losing your first rights if you posted a story there.”

This includes commonly used critique group platforms like

Critique Circle and Scribophile. I have yet to see any publishers outside of paying genre journals be as strict as Clarkesworld, but if you want to be totally safe in terms of protecting first rights you should only share work in a group where membership is limited.

What I mean by that is it must be a space online that not everyone can join for free and where membership is limited, either by there being an application process or a payment or some other method.

That being said, there are now a number of editors and journals that have started to actively push back against the notion that sharing something online in most spaces should disqualify it from serious consideration by editors.

In 2023 the editor of *Rattle*, Timothy Green, published an article titled [Uncurated: The Case for a New Term of Art](#) in Lit Mag News in 2023. The central argument that Green makes is that, given the current state of the internet, the word “published” no longer means what it once did and is no longer relevant in most situations.

He instead focuses on the word curate and the idea that curation is at the heart of what literary journal editors actually do. They read hundreds or thousands of pieces and select a few. Green argues

that, in the digital age, curation is what is significant and worth doing.

Green suggests that publishers be open to all work that has not been selected by an editor for publication before, and he proposes using the term “uncurated” to replace “unpublished.”

The article got a fair amount of attention at the time and, more important, several literary journals, including *Only Poems*, have adopted the term. They are still very much in the minority, but that very much might change over time.

I mentioned earlier that after publication the rights revert to the author and I want to circle back to the significance of that now, not just in terms of reprints but also in terms of future longer work.

Publishing shorter work in literary journals very much helps support publishing chapbooks, poetry books, and short story collections. Most publishers of work of this type expect you to already have an established track record of publication in literary journals before you submit your work to them.

That being said, you shouldn't publish all the short stories or poems in a manuscript before submitting it. If one-third of the

work is previously published, that is usually a good sign. This is one of the situations where prestigious publications can really pay off. It helps make your longer work stand out if well-known journals have already endorsed your work by publishing it.

The potential manuscript publisher would also know that, in all likelihood, those literary journals would be on board for promoting your full-length collection.

If a literary journal ever asks for copyright, this is not a good sign and you should not submit to them. This is very rare, though, and I have only encountered it once in all my years as the editor of *Authors Publish* and as a submitting author.

One of the frustrating aspects of publishing in literary journals is that they do go under. If they go under after publishing your work and taking your first publication rights, it can be an upsetting experience but it is something all actively publishing authors have been through. There is no way to avoid it entirely; it is just part of the process.

You can still submit that work to publications that consider reprints, and you can still publish it as part of a manuscript.

Some authors do submit it again as unpublished work and are successful in republishing it elsewhere without informing the editor that it was in fact previously published. I personally would not do this, in part because if you are caught, it could have serious implications. I also do not think it is ethical to do so.



## Chapter 20: What to Expect After a Journal Accepts Your Work

I have touched on some of this elsewhere, but I thought it might be helpful to also have this information concentrated in one spot.

The first time I received an acceptance, it was a shocking and not particularly pleasant experience. The publication that accepted my work did so with a form letter that looked exactly like a rejection letter except with the word “yes” instead of “no” in it.

I had expected to learn something about why they had chosen to publish my poems, but there was nothing. Now most of the acceptance letters I receive do include at least one word praising the poem they have chosen to accept, but most are still pretty bare bones and I have grown to expect that.

I’ve also grown to expect as part of the publication process one to two suggested edits. These do not always happen, but they generally are an expected part of the process, especially when working with a more established journal.

I have only once said “no” to a suggested edit. Almost all of the suggested edits I’ve received are thoughtful and appropriate. They made my poem stronger.

If you do turn down suggested edits from a journal, some will no longer want the piece you submitted but that depends on how significant the editing suggestion is.

Most literary journals don’t have a very extensive editorial process but an established magazine like The New Yorker or The Paris Review often makes all work go through extensive edits. It is something to expect as part of a major publication for the most part.

A journal should never edit your work without running the proposed edits by you. If it happens to you, please reach out to [support@authorspublish.com](mailto:support@authorspublish.com) and we will delist them or make sure that we do not review that particular journal in the future. This has never happened to me personally but it has happened to subscribers once or twice over the years.

More than once I have had the unpleasant experience of working with a publication that published my work right away, and shared a link to the published work along with the acceptance email. Some

publishers make this clear in their guidelines and, as long as they do this, it is okay, but to do it without any previous warning is not acceptable.

Most publishers in the acceptance letter make it clear that they have to hear back from you, sometimes by a stated date, before publishing a piece. They want to know if it is still available before scheduling it.

Once you have received the acceptance, you should then reach out to all the other journals the work is out at and withdraw it from their consideration. This is the way simultaneous submissions work.

After an author confirms that a piece is available for publication and approves any suggested edits that are made by the editor, the editor generally schedules the piece.

At that point most journals will then share the publication date with the author, and sometimes a proof. A proof shows your work as it will appear in the publication. Sometimes it is just your work that is shared with you, and sometimes it is the whole issue your work will appear in. Either way, check it carefully.

Print journals are more likely to send proof copies than electronic ones.

If you do not get a scheduled date for publication, it is fine to ask about it, but I discourage querying too often because it can very much get on editors' nerves, in part because it often interferes with their organizational systems. If your work is given a scheduled publication for a broader date, say the spring issue of a journal, and your poem didn't appear in that issue it would be fine to query right away.

If a journal publishes one piece a week and says that your work will appear in the winter, it is fine to query once and ask for more details, but if they do not respond, do not query again till the season is over.

When the journal publishes your work, you should then try to share links to it, and sometimes an excerpt on the various social media platforms you are active on.

Some people who are not active on social media share the news with email lists, and that is fine too.

What happens sometimes after that is that the publisher will

nominate your work for post-publication prizes, including but not limited to: The Best of the Net, The Best Small Fictions, and the Pushcart Prize.

If you are actively being published in journals, it is common to be nominated for these various prizes and anthologies. I have had work nominated for all of them and a few regional prizes as well and I have never won any of them.

It's still nice to be nominated but, generally, it does not mean you will win. A large number of writers are nominated and not many winners are selected.

Some journals also have a best work in the issue prize. If you win this prize you are usually paid and notified before the publication of the issue. This is a prize I have won in the past.

After they publish your work, some journals actively keep in touch and ask to promote past contributors' work. Many do not and simply become part of your publication history.

## Chapter 21: 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 that 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*, among 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 the book. Make sure you get in touch with all of the literary journals that published your work previously right around the time your book 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.

A number of presses and literary journals 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 because 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 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 who 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 that 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 it is also a steppingstone, 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. 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 groups.

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 select only 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 a number of good presses 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.

## **Editing or Reading for Literary Journals**

Many writers get more involved in the literary community by not just submitting to literary journals but by starting their own or joining an already established literary journal as a reader or an editor.

This can really help support the literary community as a whole and can help writers learn a lot about how publication really works. Reading for literary journals helped me more deeply understand which pieces of writing stood out and why. It also gave me a much bigger appreciation of the importance of titles.

It became clear to me early on how easy it was for good work to be lost in the influx of submissions. It also helps authors understand how the larger literary journals actually work – where often it is not just one person making a decision but a committee.

It also makes the labor involved much clearer. Often, I get emails from subscribers who are frustrated with a journal for taking over a month to respond and they don't understand why. Certainly, it should just take a few minutes to read their three poems. But whenever we release a review of a publisher, for example, they receive up to 1,000 submissions, sometimes within 24 hours.

The sheer scale becomes clearer when you are working as a reader and an editor. It can also really help you make connections within the larger literary community, with other readers and editors at the literary journal you are volunteering at, and at other literary journals.

Often you can encounter these opportunities to be a reader while submitting. Journals seeking help often post details either on their “about” page or on their submission guidelines.

The publication Lit Mag News also regularly lists opportunities for readers and editors.

We’ve also had a number of subscribers go out and start their own publications, so that is a possible route forward as well.

## Chapter 22: 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 must 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.

### **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. Because of this, they no longer have as much access to free data as they once did.

### **Poets & Writers**

Their listings are easy to navigate, but they are not very comprehensive and, more important, 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. It has a lot of good information, but it can be hard to navigate and it's not

always upfront about submission fees. This is 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.

### [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.

### [Lit Mags News](#)

Becky Tuch, the founder of the now-defunct Review Review, has started a Substack about literary journals called Lit Mag News Roundup that does an excellent job, even for free subscribers. She publishes interviews with literary journal founders, links to recently published listings, as well as grant opportunities. Tuch also keeps subscribers up to date on literary journal controversies and other issues. For paid subscribers, there are also submission events.

## **Literary Hub**

Publishing both creative writing, work focused on craft, and the current state of the community, it can help writers feel closer to the pulse of the literary community.

## Glossary of Terms

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

### **Anthology**

A published collection of poems or other pieces of 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**

A multiple submission is when you submit work that belongs to different genres (for example, a piece of flash fiction and a 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—for example, if they have not received 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 journals and anthologies. She spends much of her time researching manuscript publishers. You can follow her on Facebook here:

<https://www.facebook.com/emilyharstone/>

## About Authors Publish

Our mission is to help authors build their careers. We publish a weekly newsletter with reviews of publishers and advice for building your publishing career. We also publish books and ebooks for writers. To learn more about us, visit our website: -

[www.AuthorsPublish.com](http://www.AuthorsPublish.com)