

## Understanding Publishing Jargon (and some Publishing FAQs)

### General info:

- Nearly all publications to which you'll submit work will only consider publishing "previously unpublished" work. That includes publishing on your own website or social media.
- Not all publications pay. Most don't, and those that do are very competitive.
- Not all publications charge a submission or reading fee, but many do, and it's usually in the neighborhood of \$3-\$5. Some higher end contests charge \$20-\$30 reading fees and higher.

### Publishing terms you might run into:

**"We allow simultaneous submissions"** | This means they are OK with you sending the story/poem/article/essay to multiple journals at once to be considered for publication. They expect you to notify them if it gets published elsewhere so they can remove it from their pile.

**"We do/do not allow multiple submissions"** | This sounds like the same as above, but it's not! It means you can (or can't, depending on how they word it) send this publication multiple pieces within one submission cycle for them to consider. Most places only allow a single submission at a time for stories or essays, while many poetry publications will allow more than one poem to be considered at a time.

**"We are looking for previously unpublished work"** | This means they want stuff that has **never** been published **anywhere**. That includes your personal website or blog, your social media (if your page is public – it's less a concern if your page is very private and only open to friends and family), etc.

**"We will accept reprints"** | This means that they ARE okay publishing work that has been published somewhere else before.

**"Call for Submission" and "Open Submissions"** | This just means that a publication is accepting new submissions at that time. Most places have a submission window of a month or two, after which they close to get through reading everything and making decisions.

**"Standard manuscript format"** | For longform prose (essays, short stories, novellas, novels, etc.) there is a standard manuscript format that most publications and publishing professionals require. The highlights are: 12 point font (generally Times New Roman or a simple sans serif like Calibri), double spaced, with a couple pieces of key information on the first page. A template can be found here: [shunn.net/format/story](http://shunn.net/format/story)

**"Cover letter"** | Most places require that you share a cover letter with them when you send in your work.

The cover letter includes your intro (where you share the title of your piece, how many words it is, and what kind of work it is – fiction, nonfiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, etc.), a SHORT bio (under 100 words), any previous publications you have, etc. An example can be found here:

[janefriedman.com/perfect-cover-letter-advice-lit-mag-editor/](http://janefriedman.com/perfect-cover-letter-advice-lit-mag-editor/) (scroll to "Cover Letter Ready to Be Sent" about halfway down the page)

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### A publication is asking me to pay a submission fee. Is that a scam?

No, probably not. There are many publications that require nominal submission fees, usually around \$3 or \$5, as a way to fund the publication.

- However, if you have a long project like a novel or poetry collection, and you're trying to get an agent to represent you, this is different. Legitimate agents will **never** charge you a reading fee to decide whether or not they want to represent you!

### How do I find places to submit work?

OOF. This is endless. There are a few tried-and-true places to find places to submit work, but every writer is different in what they prefer. Here are a few:

- **DuoTrove.com** is a good, searchable database of nearly every publication out there. It costs \$5 a month for a membership.
- **Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance** has a list of Maine publishers here: [mainewriters.org/publishers](http://mainewriters.org/publishers). If you become a member of MWPA, you also have access to their Calls for Submissions listings as well as their Member Resources area.
- **Reddit** has several subreddits dedicated to sharing publishing advice and resources, and it's free.
- **The Community of Literary Magazines and Presses** has a free listing of Calls for Submissions at their website here: [www.clmp.org/programs-opportunities/calls-for-submissions/](http://www.clmp.org/programs-opportunities/calls-for-submissions/)
- **Poets & Writers** also has a free listing: [pw.org/open-reading-periods](http://pw.org/open-reading-periods)

### Do I really need a cover letter? Do I really need to follow their formatting? Do I really need to pay attention to an issue's particular theme? [Insert another "Do I really need to follow this rule the publication made?" statement here]

Yeah. Sorry. It does suck at times, but there's no faster way to get rejected than to not follow their directions, unfortunately. They are reading SO many pieces, that if someone doesn't follow the guidelines they put forth, they'll assume that person will be difficult to work with and they'll simply pass without reading. I saw this as someone who both submits a lot of work and has been a reader for a journal.

### I keep getting rejections. When should I give up?

This is THE question all writers ask. You will get rejected many, many, many times. There are simply way more talented writers than there are spots for publication. Many literary journals have an acceptance rate of only 2%-8%, meaning they reject well over 90% of what comes to them. There is no easy answer to this question, except to say: **Rejection doesn't mean you're a bad writer**. It just means you're a writer.

### What am I going to get paid if I get a short story, essay, or poem published?

The variance here is BIG. Most publications are unpaid, honestly. It's hard to keep a literary journal afloat, let alone profitable, so most places give you a free copy or something like that. Other's might provide a small payment that's like a "recognition" (meaning they recognize that you should get paid for your work, but they don't have the funds to pay you a lot) of \$25-\$50. \$100 is a good payment for a short story, essay, or poem. Above that is great.