

Publishing Creative Writing

Note: This document should only be used as a reference and should not replace assignment guidelines.

Finding the Proper Publication

Choosing the right publication for your story can easily be the difference between acceptance and rejection. Be sure to meet specific press standards for form and content before submitting, since different publications specialize in different genres, often with various sub focuses.

- Duotrope.com, an online database with listings for over 4,000 publications, is an excellent resource for creative writers. Its information can be sorted and organized in a variety of ways: genre, sub-genre, style, submission acceptance ratio, average response time, and pay categories, among others.
- Another helpful resource is the *Writer's Market*, found in most public libraries and local bookstores. It is updated annually and has a list of specific literary agents, their contact information, and what they are looking for.
- If either of these are inaccessible, search online for other possible publications and literary agents.

Finding an editor to work on your piece before submission will increase your chances of publication. Some literary agents and publications require your work to have gone through a certified editor before submission.

Writing Your Cover Letter

Include a cover letter with your submitted story, with the following:

- your contact info (name, address, email)
- a brief intro to your story (not more than a couple of lines) with genre description, word count, and why it fits with the publication
- any previous, relevant publishing credits in professional publications
- a line expressing thanks for the editor's time and consideration

A cover letter should be:

- addressed to the appropriate editor of the magazine (by name, if possible)
- pithy, simple, and to the point—not more than two or three short paragraphs
- professional in tone, rather than funny or cute

The Submission Process

Most publications have a process similar to the following, which can take at least a couple of months, depending on the efficiency of the readers.

- Your submission will be entered into the system upon receipt.
- The story will then be added to the “slush pile” (the stack of unread submissions) where between two and four separate slush readers will read and evaluate it. In general, each story goes through at least two readers, so you have at least two chances to intrigue and impress.
- The slush readers, and in some cases editors, will ultimately determine one of three possible fates for your story: rejection, workshop, or publish.

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Explanation of Common Responses

- **Rejection:** Getting a rejection letter back isn't pleasant, but it lets you know you still have considerable work to do, either on your particular story or on your general writing skills. Some publications will offer feedback with a rejection letter to help you understand what steps you might take to improve your story.
- **Workshop** (sometimes called "**revise and resubmit**"): Stories given this rating generally have potential but still need significant revision.
 - If a story receives a "workshop" designation, you might be asked to undergo a **developmental edit**. This process will generally focus on global elements such as plot, character development, description, and style to lead you to significant revision. Keep in mind that the story represents *your* work and you should not implement suggestions without first thinking critically and creatively about them.
 - A few publications offer the developmental edit in-house, but you may also seek out workshopping at the writing center, in your writing group, or through a professional service.
- **Publish:** They want to publish your story! Some publications will make publication contingent on minor changes.

After Acceptance

- **Contract:** After your story is accepted, you'll be sent a contract for rights to the story. The type of rights you sign away may differ from publication to publication, so be sure to look over your contract very carefully before you sign.
- **Substantive edit:** When the magazine gets the contract back, they'll see if there's a need for what is often called a **substantive edit**, in which the editors will work with you to refine the story. This edit is similar to a developmental edit, but changes will generally be less drastic.
- **Copy edit:** The final editing stage polishes local issues such as sentence structure, spelling, and grammar to prepare your work for publication. You will only be contacted about the copy edit if changes significantly alter the style or voice of the piece.

List of Area Publications

Warp and Weave - UVU sci/fi, fantasy

Leading Edge - sci/fi, fantasy

Touchstones - UVU literary fiction magazine

Sunstone - literary fiction, religious fiction

Segullah - LDS women's fiction, poetry, personal narrative

Peculiar - Provo, UT's LGBT queer literature journal (poetry, prose, short stories)

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