

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## RULES

*Does the guideline about a work not having been published in a "publication" with a readership of not more than 1000 refer to possible book distribution or just to periodicals?*

Both. The guideline about a work being published refers to all types of publication that could potentially have a distribution of 1000 or more, or works published on a webpage that could receive 1000 or more viewers annually. We have also made a clarifying statement in the rules regarding self-published works, which is that if a book is self-published and either has over 1000 copies sold, printed, or is made available for sale via Amazon or Kindle or Nook or another print-on-demand service, it DOES COUNT as a published work. A thousand copies may not have actually been sold, but with an international market such as the internet and no ability for WWV to account for how many units have truly been sold, we have to err on the side of the potential sale.

The short version, though, is that self-published/print on demand is publication.

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*Would I qualify for the Emerging Writers category since my news articles have been published?*

It kind of depends on how large the paper's circulation is. The rule is that you can't have won a cash prize in our contest before and you can't have been published in a publication with a circulation greater than 5000. Most city newspapers will have a print run of over 5000, but perhaps a small town paper would not. Check with the paper in question to find out. The other major factor in this is that even if the print run is below 5000, the piece being submitted must never have been published at all.

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*Is it permissible to re-enter a work that was rejected last year?*

"Rejected" is such an ugly word. We prefer "not selected." But still. You may certainly resubmit something from a previous year, provided it has never won a cash prize. There are different judges from year to year, so it can be a matter of a piece finding a receptive judicial home.

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*Should manuscripts be stapled or paper-clipped?*

Of course, **the best way to avoid any staple or paperclip issues is to submit your entries online.**

But, both are acceptable, though **stapling the entry pages together and affixing the entry form and check with a paperclip is preferred.** Stapled entry pages reduce the risk of any pages getting lost in the shuffle. If we feel like a manuscript needs a staple, we'll add one at no charge. We don't go so extreme as to discard entries that lack a staple or paperclip. We just add them where they're needed.

*What should go on the title page?*

The title page is kind of optional. Some people choose to do a separate title page with just the title centered and the category and word count in the upper right corner. Others choose to let the first page serve as the title page, with the category and word count in the upper right corner, the title centered below that and then the story or poem beginning immediately after. Either way is acceptable provided the authors name does not appear on it anywhere.

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*I read that the entrant's name should be nowhere except the entry form. How do judges and contest officials know which entry belongs to each person?*

The judges will **not** know, by design. Part of the duties of the contest coordinator is to maintain a database for the contest which includes cataloging each entry as it arrives, using the information supplied on the contest entry form. The coordinator assigns each contest entry its own individual code which is written on the first page of that entry before being filed with the other entries in that contest category. So only the contest coordinator knows which entries are by which authors. The judges never know who the author is until after the awards banquet is concluded, so they can remain completely impartial in their evaluation of the entries for their category. At the end of their evaluation, they send only the codes for the winning and honorable mention stories, indicating the ranking order.

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*When submitting an excerpt, should the word count on the cover page indicate the number of words in the excerpt or the total number of words in the entire work?*

The word count should indicate the number of words in the excerpt.

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*I have a piece that I would like to submit for the contest but I have also submitted it for publication. If it is accepted, it won't be published until late spring. Who/how does one make the call on that as to the guidelines for the contest?*

As long as the piece was not published before the contest opens, you're good to go. Even if it's accepted for publication, it won't be published until later in the year at the earliest, so you're still within the guidelines of the contest.

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*I have an entry which is ready and I would like to send it off. However, I think I may want to enter one or two other categories once I have a chance to polish my entries a little more. On the entry form it says "Only one entry form per person is necessary." But what if I send entries at different times before the contest deadline? Should I include a separate entry form for each mailing, or just attach a note to subsequent entries saying that I have already filled out an entry form with my first submission?*

You may send a separate entry form for any additional submissions sent later. It's basically one form per packet of entries. The "one entry form per person" thing is mainly to indicate that it doesn't have to be one form per entry within a given submission shipment. You can always send more later with a

separate form. And since you are also able to enter online, you can always submit a second online entry later too.

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*If I write something for the contest am I able to look for somewhere to publish it before or afterward?*

As long as the piece was not published prior to the beginning of the contest, you're welcome to submit it and immediately seek publication for it elsewhere.

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*I always wrestle with the phrase, "a work will be considered published." If I had a story picked up for a literary anthology e-book, is that considered published? I seriously doubt they sold (or gave away) 1000 copies. Also, if I had a story picked up for an on-line journal is that considered published? There's soooo many these days.*

According to the rules of the contest (found on the entry form), in both of the instances you mention the work would be considered published. Mainly because even online publication is considered publication depending on the potential number of views a work might get. Even with low circulation numbers for a given work, WVW has no way to verify those numbers. Same for self-published books. They may not have 1000 in sales, but, again, WVW has no way to verify that. If a self-published book or ebook is available on Amazon then there is an international potential for over 1000 people to have seen it.

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*I live out of state. For membership, should I send my paper membership application form (which sometimes provides a different address) with the membership fee and contest submission, or should I send the membership application separately to its own address with a note that the fee was sent with the contest submission?*

If you were in-state it wouldn't really matter which address you sent your membership to (the one on the membership application for our website or the one on the contest entry form). However, because we require organizational membership for people entering our contest who live out-of-state it's important that the contest coordinator know that you're a member when processing your entry. Generally, it's easier if you include your membership application and fee as part of your contest entry fees. This way your status will be immediately known, and your membership information will be forwarded on to the secretary and your check to our treasurer.

(WV Writers is an a volunteer organization with officers spread across the state, so it has been tricky sometimes... but online payments and email have simplified things dramatically, so we encourage that whenever possible.)

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*Does the word count include the title, or just the body of the piece of writing?*

Word count doesn't include the title. Or "The End" in case you've added that. It also doesn't include the category and word count number at the top right of the first page of your entry, so you can just count the bare bones of the story and write that number in for the word count.

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*I won 1st Place last year in Emerging Writer's Poetry. Can I submit to Emerging Writer's Prose this year?*

Sorry (or congratulations), but once you've won a cash prize in any WV Writers contest category, you have officially **emerged** and the Emerging Writers categories are forever off limits.

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*I would like to submit writing to multiple categories. Can copies of one writing sample be submitted to multiple categories (with entry fee for each submission)?*

You are correct. A single piece may be submitted to multiple categories, with entry fees for each. You **do** need to send a separate copy of the manuscript for each category it is being submitted to.

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*The piece that I want to submit is just under 3000 words, and 5000 is the word limit. Is a smaller article going to be acceptable?*

Absolutely. There's no minimum. You could have a 100 word story and it would still be eligible. We just have the ceiling of 5000 words for most prose categories.

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*The entry form states that a current membership is required if not a resident of West Virginia. I am now, and I always have been a West Virginia resident. It is not clear as to whether WV residents must be members in order to enter the contest. Is Membership in WV Writers required, to submit an entry?*

The contest is open to WV residents and current members of WVW, Inc. **Membership is not required to enter the contest provided the entrant is a resident of West Virginia.** The only time membership in the organization is required is when the entrant is a resident of another state. (The origin of this particular rule is that until the early 2000s, only residents of West Virginia could enter the contest, regardless of whether or not they were members of WVW. However, we had a number of former in-state members who moved to other states but still wished to be able to enter the contest. In 2005 (if memory serves), we opened the contest to all residents of West Virginia and to non-residents who were members of WV Writers.)

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*I didn't seem to get the impression that you necessarily publish the winners of your contest. If I win a prize does my work still count as unpublished? In other words, if I win will I only be able to try to sell it to a magazine as a reprint?*

We do not automatically publish the work of the winners of our contest. We have published winners in the past in anthology collections, but only with the written permission of the author. We do not retain copies of the winning entries--the judges destroy them one month after the winners are announced.

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*If I submit a work to the contest (whether I win or not) will I be assigning/surrendering any aspect of my rights under copyright?*

You retain full copyright of your work and the copy of the work you submit to the contest will be destroyed after judging. WV Writers has no ability to do anything with submitted work without permission of the author. Typically, every few years we do approach past winners to ask them if they will allow us to use their winning entries in one of our contest winner anthologies, but the winners control all aspects of use, including the right to say, "No, thank you." We have tossed around the idea of doing an online journal featuring winning entries, but it's never fully materialized.

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*I would like to submit to the contest, but I have taken an online class from the judge of the category I want to submit to. I've made lots of changes to the manuscript, but I'm afraid they still might recognize my work. Should I still submit?*

This is a tough one, but in this case we would recommend you **do not** submit if there is any possible chance a judge might be familiar with your work already. The WV Writers contest is judged blindly, so that the judges are never provided the names of the authors whose work has been submitted to them. The only possible way for them to know who has written a piece is if they recognize it as something they have read before. We pick judges from out of state to help minimize the chances of this happening, but with prevalence of online writing workshops, the chances can increase. For this reason, we give our judges strict instructions that if they recognize a piece of writing and realize the identity of its author, they are to disqualify that work from consideration.

If you think there is even a possibility that one of our judges might recognize your work, we ask that you save that work for submission next year when a different judge will be assigned to that category.

This has happened in the past and it created one of the rare situations in which we had to disqualify the entry.

# POETRY

*Can I submit a collection of my poems?*

While we have offered Poetry Collection or Chapbook categories in the past, if the contest is not explicitly offering one of those categories, each poem needs to count as one entry.

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*The Short Poetry category has a limit of 20 lines or fewer. Does a "line" (in the count) consist of a new line no matter how short it is? Or does a sentence count as a line even if it extends on to the next line?*

For lines of poetry, our interpretation is **the number of actual lines of text on the page**, regardless of length. (Spacing lines between paragraphs do not count, though.) Some might argue that the lines should refer to actual sentences even if those sentences crossed onto new lines. Short poetry and Long poetry tend to get equal numbers of submissions, so there's little advantage to picking one over the other anyway.

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*I hope to send a poem for the contest previously published, but now I have added a new, substantial quote below the title, before the poem starts. Is this permissible?*

If the poem has been previously published it would not qualify for the contest, even with an added quote.

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*For the poetry entries, does one poem equal one entry?*

For our all Poetry categories (Short, Long, Emerging), this is correct. One poem per entry fee.

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*If you receive entries for poetry with no word count in the upper right of the page are the entries discarded? Since it was any form up to four pages I didn't include word count since the entries didn't have many words.*

If there's ever an issue that would prevent an entry from being eligible we do everything we can to work with the author to get it into eligibility shape.

Your logic on the word count is spot on. Poetry doesn't really need a word count. Mostly the word count rule applies to prose entries, where it matters. Poetry only has a line limit for short poetry and a page limit for long poetry.

## BOOK LENGTH PROSE

*I am interested in submitting work for the writer's contest but I'm not sure how to proceed. I want to compete in the Book Length Prose category. The instructions say "send 7500 words plus a one page synopsis." Does that mean that I send the 1st portion of the book and then encapsulate the rest in a summary? I have never entered before and I want to get it right.*

For the Book Length Prose as well as the Middle Grade Novel/Young Adult Novel categories (both of which accept up to 7500 words) we advise writers to send the 7500 words of their manuscript that they feel best exemplifies their work. This may come from the beginning, middle, end, or a combination of passages from more than one of those. However, when considering what to send, keep in mind that a judge might prefer a cohesive segment, rather than samples. The synopsis must be included to show the judge the overall story.

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*I had a question concerning the book length prose category, and was hoping you could help me out. Is the submission supposed to be a 7500 word excerpt from a longer work, or a complete story that is simply longer than the submissions in other categories?*

The 7500 word excerpt is to be from a book-length work (which are typically over 80,000 words). The synopsis is there to provide an overview of the book's entire story, but the 7500 words comes from within that larger work--though not necessarily the beginning of it.

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*Am I correct that only the Book-Length category considers works over 5,000 words? I wasn't sure if the other categories consider 5,000 word excerpts of longer works?*

Yes. Book Length is the only category that accepts works of over 5,000 words, but the specifics is that it accepts a 7,500 word *excerpt* with a 1 page synopsis. The work itself may be 90,000 words, but we can only receive a 7,500 word excerpt for the contest, plus the synopsis of the entire story.

As to whether the other categories will accept 5000 word excerpts of longer work, the spirit of the contest is that the works submitted for all prose categories, unless otherwise specified, should fit within the 5000 word limit.

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*For Book Length Prose, I know that the cover page must have the title, category and word count on it, but should the narrative also begin on the cover page or on the second page? Should any other "front matter" be included, such as dedications or attributions for quotations from public domain sources? Is the title and other front matter included in the word count?*

Cover pages and front matter are not necessary, though they do not count against you either. Our judges mainly need the writing itself, as that is what is being judged. Our standard formatting is to just put the category and word count at the top of the first page, leaving the title for just above the beginning of the

text. We would not encourage including dedications or attributions. They just eat into your word limit and are not necessary to the judging process.

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*Should the one-page synopsis be more like the "teaser" summaries that explain what a book is about without spoiling the ending or should it try to tell as much as possible about how the story ends?*

No. In fact **a synopsis should definitely spoil the ending**. One of the frequent things we have had to do in the past is communicate with writers to ask for more detailed synopses to be sent because the one submitted did not give the full story of the manuscript in question.

For a synopsis you need to describe the **entire** plot of the book, in thumbnail form, in one page. The judge has to be able to see the overall arc of the book's plot, which will help them see how the excerpt submission fits into that picture. So spoil away!

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*Will the judges pick a subset of the best Book-Length entries and then request the full manuscripts to complete the judging or do they make their decision solely on the submitted excerpts?*

The judge will base their decisions solely on the excerpts and synopses.

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*I know the excerpt has to be double-spaced, but does the synopsis have to be as well?*

The synopsis page may be single-spaced, but must fit on one side of its single printed page.

## SHORT STORY

*I'm interested in entering a short story from a series that I'm writing, but although some are under 5,000 words my favorite one is just under 7,100 words. Is there a category under which such a story could be entered... or am I just out of luck there?*

I'm afraid this is indeed a situation where we don't have a category to fit the bill. The reason we have the limit is because of the number of entries we receive. For short stories, we average 100 entries per year, all of which have to be read by our judge. If even half the entries are at the 5000 word limit, that's a LOT of words for a judge to get through in the month and a half they will have. The 5000 word limit can still lead to a fairly overwhelming experience for the judge, but it is manageable.



## SOCIAL CHANGE

*Regarding the Social Change (Pearl S. Buck Award), would it be appropriate to include a photo I took with a story?*

A photo would probably be fine to include provided it does not include images that could lead the judge to be able to identify you the author. So you should definitely not appear within it, nor, probably should anyone in your family. Chances aren't high that the judge would know anyone, but because the contest is blindly judged we like to remove all possibilities of that happening.

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*As some sort of reference for me, I was wondering if you could possibly forward the winning entry of the Social Change (Pearl S. Buck Award) category to me so I can get an idea what to shoot for?*

The winning entries from previous years are no longer in our organizational possession. The judges destroy them at the end of the judging period.

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*For the Social Change (Pearl S. Buck Award) category, the entry form says "nonfiction or poetry...on a topic related to social change," and what I'm wondering is whether nonfiction submissions need to be creative (like poetry) or whether academic, journalistic, and/or otherwise persuasive nonfiction would be acceptable? Would you address this question for me? Perhaps you could answer by referring to the previous winning pieces.*

The category itself has a lot of range when it comes to subject matter. Basically anything that isn't outright fiction is fair game. Academic/journalistic and persuasive nonfiction essays are completely acceptable. These don't have to be creative, but that approach would be fine as well.

It is difficult to address this in terms of what has won in the past, because any approach could be accomplished to a winning level. From a sheer statistical point of view, many of the winning entries in previous years were poetry, but again I don't believe this to be a determiner. First and foremost the entries had to be about Social Change, not simply espousing a viewpoint; secondly, they had to be well-written to be considered for placement.

# NEW MOUNTAIN VOICES

*Can homeschool children participate?*

Absolutely. We like home school as well as away-from-home school.

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*I recognize the fact that there are two contests--one specifically for students, and the other just a 'writing contest'. I am interested in entering the adult writing contest, because the young writers one does not include book-length prose. There didn't appear to be any guidelines against me entering the regular contest, but I wanted to be sure before I submitted anything, just in case.*

You are right: there are no rules against student-aged humans entering the regular "adult" contest. Students are welcome to do so, but should remember that they'll be competing with adult writers some of whom have quite a bit of experience. Unlike the New Mountain Voices Student Contest, which is free, the adult contest does come with fees. And whereas we notify the student winners in advance of the awards banquet at our Summer Conference so they can attend if they wish, the earliest that winners of the adult contest will learn of their win is at the awards banquet itself.

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*In order to enter, must you be positive that you will be at the awards banquet?*

You do not have to attend the awards banquet to win. We mail out certificates and prize money to the winners early in the week following the awards banquet. And we try to have the winners listed on our website and via email to entrants by Sunday night of that weekend.

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*Is a teacher or parent allowed to make edits and recommendations on a student's writings?*

Having an outside proofreader is a longstanding tradition for writers of all stripes. Students may certainly let an adult read over their submission before sending it. We would suggest that the adult may then offer editing and revision suggestions, but should explain the reasons for those suggestions as a teaching opportunity. Then the student should be allowed to make those changes themselves. This way they pick up grammar tips for the future, in addition to having a cleaner story or poem.

It goes without saying, however, that **in no way should a parent or teacher do any of the writing themselves.**

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*I'm a high school student, and I'm wondering if I enter the contest and place, can I enter again when I'm older for the adult contest?*

You can certainly enter the adult contest later, but it would need to be with a piece that is not the one you won with in the NMV contest. Once a piece has placed 1st, 2nd or 3rd in either WWV contest, it is no longer eligible for future competition. Honorable mentions, however, can be resubmitted in the

future. And any piece you submit that does not place in NMV can certainly be submitted to the adult contest down the line, provided there's a category it fits into.

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*For the New Mountain Voices contest, would it be okay if the entry was a little over the 2,000 word limit? Like, say about 300 words or so over the limit? Or is it a strict limit?*

**The contest has a strict word limit.** We don't count the title, the contest category and word count in the corner of the front page, nor the "the end," but everything in between is strict to the number.

## MISCELLANEOUS

*Is there a way to read the winners' entries for the past years?*

Technically, yes, but probably not in the way most folks expect. Some of the winning entries from 1977-2008 have been published in five separate collections. These were done on a piece by piece basis, since WVW retains no rights to publication of the winning pieces, so even the collections do not contain ALL contest winners, but only a majority of them. The last such volume, Seeking the Swan, was published in 2008. (You can find these listed on Amazon. If you attend a WVW Summer Conference, we can find a copy of it for you, and possibly most of the others.)

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I don't have a credit card or use of PayPal, so how do I pay the fees?

If you enter the contest by mail, you can send a check for submission fees. Just download the contest entry form you need from our contest page (either the Adult Contest Form or New Mountain Voices Student Contest form) and follow the instructions. The address to send submissions to is on each form.

## CHILDREN'S BOOKS

*Is photography considered "artwork". I want to make sure that if I submit photos within my stories, it won't be disqualified.*

Photography would be considered artwork but would not disqualify an entry if included.

## STAGE PLAY / SCREENPLAY

*My fellow writers in my writers group suggested I submit my screenplay. Do you have a category for the contest this year?*

We take screenplays every other year in a round robin fashion with stage plays. Our Screenplay category is named in memory of Joe McCabe, a beloved playwright from Martinsburg. If the contest form says screenplay and that's what you have, you're in luck. Otherwise, you'll have to wait two years for it to come around again.

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*Your contest rules state that entries should be stapled or paperclipped. With the screenplay category, which accepts up to a 30-page sample. Are writers able to submit a script that's conventionally bound, using metal brads to fasten three-hole-punched pages at top and bottom? Please let me know if the readers have a preference.*

Online entries are always preferred. However, the binding you write of would be just fine. The WVV contest rules used to be very picky about the binding on stage plays and screenplays, but larger manuscripts definitely need a bit more to them than a staple or a paperclip. (In 2013, we received a full length screenplay sandwiched between two 8.5" x 11" planks of plywood and that clued us in to what might have caused binding problems in the past. These days, brads or a slim clear document holder are happily accepted.