

## A Quick guide to: Writing for Magazines

### Fiction

Every publication is different, so their **target market, house style, and the types of story** they want, may be quite specific. The best way to understand these quirks is to buy a selection of magazines and read the stories in them. How long are they? What subject matter is covered? What are the characters like? Are the stories exciting/ heart-warming/ dramatic/ strange etc?

Before you start writing, think about which stories/ magazines **you would like to read yourself**, and also what style of writing you'd be happy working in. (This may not be the same thing, but often is.) Having said that, it's useful for writing practice to have a go at creating different types of story that are targeted for very different types of magazine. For instance, you might do a historical saga for a mainstream women's mag, and then try an off-the-wall horror for an online publication.

Pay close attention to each magazine's **submission requirements**: specifically the word count, and any preferences for the formatting. If you can't find any information, count the words in the stories you've seen. Or contact the magazine, and ask them. I'm afraid there's no point sending them a story, however good it is, if it doesn't meet their criteria.

**Word count** requirements vary a lot: from very short stories, to lengthy series or even pocket novels. Ask yourself what length your story needs (to be told effectively), and what you're comfortable writing. When you're starting out, it's best to aim for the lower word counts, to make it easier for you to edit and hone your stories.

### Non-fiction

There are two ways you can approach writing articles for a magazine:

- 1) Sending in something you've already written
- 2) Sending in a pitch for something you'd like to write about

Different publications will have different rules about this. Search for information on their website, or contact them if you're not sure.

Choose a subject you are interested in, and preferably one that you have personal experience with. Then look at all the magazines available, and target the most suitable ones.

If you're writing the full article first, make sure you stick to a word count (if they've stated one; or count the words in an article you've seen in their publication). Ensure the article has a **beginning, middle and end** (like a short story), and that your **facts are correct**. If you're sending pictures in (some publications request this), make sure they're good quality.

If you're sending a **pitch**, be clear why you're the best person to write about it. Highlight the main points you'll cover, and summarise the aims of the article. If you've had articles printed previously, add a link if possible, or send an example of your work (if requested).

## Payment

This will vary a lot, and some publications don't pay at all. When you're starting out, you may feel it's more important to get your name out there, and have your work in print (or on screen). But try to aim for companies that will pay you for your services. After all, **writing is a job**, and is something that should be paid for. Understandably, payment is often higher for known writers, so if you find a magazine you like writing for, stay in their good books - your fee might increase!

Be careful about **giving away too many rights** (it's best to read up on copyright rules etc if you're unsure). 'First rights' means they can print your story, but you retain ownership of it. (Rules vary, especially if the company has an online presence, but this means you might be free to get it printed elsewhere after a year from initial publication.) If you sign away 'all rights', the story/ work is no longer yours. You will have been paid to produce it (hopefully), but now the company can do whatever they want with it (including editing it heavily, printing it elsewhere, or even distributing it under someone else's name etc). If you want to retain ownership, aim for the companies that offer 'first rights' only, especially if your non-fiction articles relate to knowledge/ skills you have developed. But if you're happy to churn out stories and let them go after being paid, then you can happily sign contracts for 'all rights'.

## Who to send to?

The best research you can do is pop into a newsagent or other shop that sells magazines, and **look at what's available**. Search online for their websites and contact details, and find out what their submission guidelines are. There are also countless e-zines on the internet.

There are some **helpful websites** that list those that offer payment. Type "magazines that pay for short stories UK" into the search box and see what comes up. For example:

<https://www.christopherfielden.com/short-story-tips-and-writing-advice/short-story-magazines.php>

Or you can cast your net wider, and try international publications. A US example:

<https://thewritelife.com/where-to-submit-short-stories/>

Writing Magazine and Writers' Forum are both fantastic magazines, full of helpful information, inspiration, and opportunities to get your work out there.

**Good luck, and happy writing!**