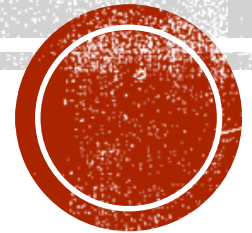
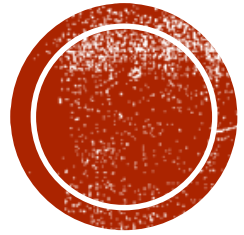


# SUBMISSIONS 101 FOR CREATIVE WRITERS

*How to submit more with fewer headaches*

By Anthony DiPietro





# STUFF YOU'LL NEED



# WHAT WILL I NEED?

- A cover letter template
- A bio
  - 50-word version
  - 75-word version
  - 100-word version
- Access to the internet
- Consider memberships to:
  - Facebook groups that post calls for submissions
  - Duotrope
  - AWP
- A Submittable account
- A credit card



# WHAT GOES IN A COVERLETTER?

- A heading addressed to the proper person.
- PRO TIP: When customizing the template, always take a few seconds to navigate to find the masthead and get the name of the top editor. Founding editor, executive editor, editor-in-chief, or managing editor are common titles. Address the letter to that person.
- Optional: one warm-up sentence. (e.g. *I learned about your journal from a call for submissions that went out to Stony Brook MFA students, and I was excited to read about your theme of Transformation.*)
- Statement of submission genre and title. (e.g. *I'm pleased to attach my short story, "Hills Like White Elephants," for your review.*)
- Statement that my bio is below, then I paste the bio as a new paragraph in third person.



# WHAT GOES IN MY BIO?

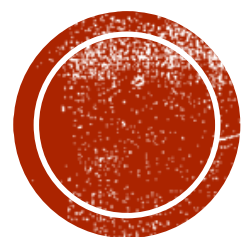
## Start with Some or All of This:

- Name: write in third person
- Places: where I was born or grew up, where I live now
- What degree(s) do I have?
- Prior publications and awards
- Career stuff: what have I done, and what am I doing now?
- Do I reside with a spouse, kids, pets?

## What Not to Do:

- Don't violate the word limit.
- It's not in first person. If the piece is published, editors will have to revise the bio; don't make extra work for them.
- This isn't a place to brag or include quotes about myself.
- Optional: if there's space, add something cute or funny about you. My bio doesn't include this.





**RESEARCH**



# WHO'S LOOKING FOR MY WORK?

## Free Ideas:

- Weekly Submittable email
- Department submission digest
- Writer's Chronicle/AWP website
- Fellow students
- Facebook groups
- Online lists of free-to-submit, paying markets
- The books you are already reading by authors you admire—check their acknowledgements sections for where excerpts were first published.

## Ideas that Cost Money:

- Duotrope has a membership fee
- Poets & Writers mostly lists contests
- **PRO TIP**—Ask faculty or mentors to recommend journals that may like what you write



# HOW DO I DECIDE WHERE TO SUBMIT?

## A List of Criteria

- Do they have some longevity, or is it possible they'll stop printing tomorrow?
- Are they using Submittable or their own online submission manager?
- Do I fit their theme or interest?
- Are they reading right now?
- Are they prestigious? Are they too prestigious/competitive?
- How does their site and finished product look—would I be proud to appear here?

## They might be a prestigious, competitive journal if:

- You've heard of them somewhere, like from MFA faculty, or your favorite writer has been printed there
- They nominate for awards; their writers have appeared in *Best American* or won *Pushcart Prizes*
- They are print-only
- They pay their writers
- They have been around at least five or more years





# WHAT ABOUT THAT THING OF READING BACK ISSUES?

## I don't do that, 'cuz...

- It gives me very limited information
- I can't afford the time or cost to read back issues
- All editors say "above all, we look for quality, so just send us your very best work"
- I've done best with publications where there is a stated or suggested theme

## I do skim what's on their site to see:

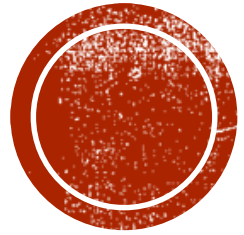
- Do they like long or short poems?
- Can they accommodate funky formatting or do they only print left-justified poems?
- Do they like accessible or inaccessible?
- Do they like more lyrical or narrative?
- How risky or political can my content and language get?



# TO CONTEST OR NOT TO CONTEST?

- What happens to contest entries?
  - Probably they're read by volunteers/interns, then a selection is read by editors, then a very small number of finalists is read by the judge, who has to like your work best.
- Do I have the money?
- Do I feel lucky?
- Do I have reason to think the judge may like my work?
- Is there a theme or page requirement (e.g. manuscript length for a chapbook or book contest)?
  - Then do I have a piece that fits?
  - And am I proud of that piece today or does it need significant work?
  - Will I need to change it to fit requirements?





# A SYSTEM TO STAY ORGANIZED



# WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- It stores my research so I don't have to research over and over again.
- It makes me more efficient when I sit down to submit.
- It helps me decide which pieces to send out, and be sure they're all in circulation.
- I know how well I'm doing, which keeps me motivated.
- When I get an acceptance, I can quickly withdraw my work from other places.
- I can prevent mistakes like:
  - Addressing my coverletter to the wrong person
  - Forgetting and missing deadlines
- I know when it's time to submit to the same place again.
- Duotrope and Submittable can't really do it all for me; there are still some journals that have their own way of taking submissions.



# OK BUT HOW DO I DO THIS?

- It starts with a list. How/where do you keep to-do lists?
- I find Excel easiest because of the Sort function.
- That means I can sort by poem, by journal, or by date, and quickly find the info I need.

**PRO TIP: Keep all submission-ready pieces, coverletters, bios, and research together in a submissions folder or area of the computer.**



## WHAT KINDS OF INFO SHOULD I KEEP TRACK OF?

**PRO TIP—Be sure to read and follow all requirements:**

**Do they suggest a font/font size? Should your name appear in the submission? Do they allow Word or PDF? What's the length limit?**

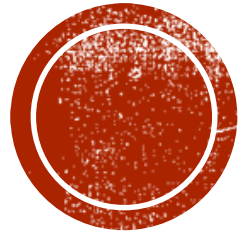
- Before submitting:
  - Name of journal
  - Link to the full info
  - Their upcoming theme or what I think I'll submit
  - Their deadline
  - Editor's name can be useful to have handy
- After submitting:
  - What I submitted
  - To what journal
  - When
- After hearing back:
  - The results
  - Accepted, rejected, withdrawn
  - Notes—was it a personalized rejection, did it include feedback or an invitation to submit again?



# WHEN DO I DO THIS? HOW DO I STAY MOTIVATED?

- I go to submit-a-thons
- I have scheduled my own submit-a-thon with a friend at a coffee shop
- I've found it easy to do late at night if I don't feel like reading or writing anymore
- When I get an email from Submittable or the Submission Digest, I go through it right away and add info to my Tickler (list of future submissions). This way they're logged with a deadline.
- I work on a few submissions every two weeks, which is generally often enough to never miss a deadline.
- I still often miss deadlines.
- I and my friends celebrate the rejections, because it means we've put in the work and we are one step closer to our next publication.



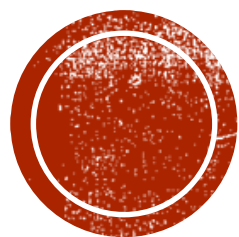


# **WINNING STUFF**

**Conferences**  
**Fellowships**

**Scholarships**  
**Residencies**





**PRO TIP: IT'S THE EXACT  
SAME PROCESS!**

- Applications take longer than submissions
- There are often more requirements to follow, attachments to prepare, and decisions to make
- An up-to-date CV is a must
- Contact info for two to four people who are ready and willing to serve as references
- Optional: most applications ask if you have a website.
  - You can set one up in minutes to hours on Wix, Wordpress, or Weebly
  - I use Wix because research shows it has the best designs and the most flexibility
  - Another option is to set up a Facebook or Instagram account for yourself as artist/writer, and use that link when they ask for a website.

**YES, REALLY IT IS...**

**with only a couple of differences...**



# WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT APPLICATIONS?

- Applications are a chance to build a set of files where I write about:
  - Who I am as an artist, my style and interests, my process
  - My past achievements or proudest moments—as writer or otherwise
  - My vision for my thesis or major project
  - Around 2,000 characters on each of those questions is a good amount of writing.
  - All applications ask for the same info but word and group questions differently. The way to get through this is to keep templates and quickly edit to be responsive to a specific application.
- Churning out applications gets easier and more efficient with practice.



# THAT SOUNDS HARD!

- Writing conferences are easiest to get into. Super easy.
  - Most of them are serving average citizens who don't teach writing and don't publish but happen to have an interest in writing.
  - As a MFA student, I am already sure my writing quality will pass muster.
- Winning scholarships and fellowships to attend a conference is almost as easy.
  - This can be as easy as checking off a box or sending a one-sentence email that says you need financial aid in order to attend.
  - Or this can be a little extra work. Some require a paragraph to a page explaining that you have financial need but are passionately excited to attend this specific conference for a specific reason.
  - I do not send my income tax info, but some conferences ask for it to demonstrate need.
- Residencies are hardest to get, and probably most competitive.
  - They are not all free; some of them have a fee or rent associated with them.
  - Some also have financial aid available.
  - Always check requirements. Some residencies specifically exclude MFA candidates. Others require you to have published 1-2 full-length books.



# THANKS! QUESTIONS?

Anthony DiPietro

AnthonyWriter.com

anthony.dipietro@stonybrook.edu

