

Submissions FAQ

Updated: May 2023

When is *The Stinging Fly* open for submissions?

The Stinging Fly is open for submissions in November and May. The next submission window is from May 16th to May 30th, 2023. Please check back then for the link to our Submittable portal.

What is Submittable?

Submittable is the software we use to manage submissions. It is free for you to use and you can sign up at www.submittable.com

Do I have to pay to submit work to *The Stinging Fly*?

No!

Who can submit work to *The Stinging Fly* and what categories of creative writing are eligible?

We publish new, previously unpublished work by Irish and international writers over the age of eighteen. Each issue of *The Stinging Fly* includes a mix of poetry, short story and creative non-fiction/essay, alongside our Comhchealg sections, occasional author interviews and novel extracts. We also welcome submissions of poetry and prose in translation.

Can I submit more than one piece of work if they fall under different categories, for example, a short story and a novel extract?

We ask that writers who wish to send us work submit under one category per submission period. This is for two reasons. Firstly, it helps us manage submission numbers, and means that we can give each writer's work the attention we feel it deserves. Secondly, we hope that this will give writers the time, space and permission to focus on and polish the piece they're submitting to us, safe in the knowledge that there will be another submission window in six months for other pieces they are working on.

Can I submit work that's under consideration elsewhere?

We ask that you do not submit work to us that is currently under consideration elsewhere. We feel it is important that we're given the appropriate time and space to reflect on the work you submit to us. Reading, assessing and discussing a piece that we later find out has been accepted for publication elsewhere is pretty disheartening!

What happens to my work when I submit?

When the submissions window closes, the work that has come in is identified by category and assigned to a member of our team — from our editorial staff, one of our contributing editors, or one of our experienced readers. Every submission is

read, often multiple times, and each team member will make a shortlist of pieces they think are particularly striking. These shortlisted pieces are assigned to the editor, who reads them all closely; makes notes on style, tone and content; confers with the team; and finally decides whether the piece will find a place in the issue.

What happens to my work if it is selected for publication?

If your work is selected, one of our editors will contact you directly to say hello and to let you know about the process of preparing your work for publication. Some pieces may need only a light editorial touch, while others may benefit from multiple drafts as we work with the writer to realise their vision. It's often the case that asking challenging questions opens up new possibilities for the piece and for its writer. When you and the editor are happy, the work is typeset and sent forward to our proof-reader for final checks (spelling, grammar, fact-checking and so on). You are consulted on these final suggestions before they're implemented, and will have a chance to see how the piece looks laid out on the page. All our contributors are paid — and you can see the pay rates at the bottom of our [Submissions page](#).

What if I disagree with the editor?

The piece you submit to us remains yours, and we will not demand you make any changes you're uncomfortable with. We would work to find a solution that makes sense to you and that you're inspired by. But equally, if we can find no way forward, and if the editor feels that they cannot stand over the piece as it's written, then we will not be able to publish it. The editorial process only works when both parties are engaged and happy.

What happens if my work is not selected for publication?

The Stinging Fly will let you know through Submittable if you were unsuccessful on this occasion. We aim to get back to everyone within 4 months of the submission window closing.

Will I know if it got close? Does *The Stinging Fly* give personalised feedback?

We usually let writers know if their work was shortlisted during the selection process. Sometimes, it's the case that a piece is maybe too similar to another selected for the issue, or is just not quite right for us, though we admired the work. In these instances, we may ask the writer to please submit again to us in the next submission window (and yes, we will remember you!). Sometimes, we might feel the piece submitted to us has potential, but requires substantial development. In that instance, we would try to offer useful feedback, and ask the writer to please submit the piece again if they choose to rewrite it. We also aim to offer special encouragement to writers with clear promise who may not be ready for publication yet!

Rejection is discouraging...

It is. *The Stinging Fly* reads every piece sent to us, thoroughly and thoughtfully, but it is true that we only publish between 1 and 2 percent of everything we read. Rejection is common to all writers' journeys; it does not mean the end of the road. Recently, we published a series of short essays reflecting on the experience of rejection, which you might find useful. You can find them [here](#).

What is the importance given to my bio? I'm worried I'm not ticking the right boxes...

Here at *The Stinging Fly*, giving everyone a fair shake is very important to us, and we strongly encourage submissions by writers from underrepresented areas of society. But at the submissions stage, or the first reading of your work, your bio/cover letter/ publication credits have little bearing on our decision making. Many of our readers choose to read work without looking at any of the cover sheets or bios. Later, of course, we'll want to know more about you, and your bio may or may not provide useful context. But first and foremost, your submission will be judged on its own terms, and not on your background, your achievements, or inexperience, as the case may be!

Do I need to include a synopsis if I submit a novel extract?

No. For novel extracts, it is important to keep in mind that the piece you submit should be able to be read without further context: something from a longer story, but which can still be enjoyed on its own.

What about extracts from a memoir?

We believe that it's likely the most suitable category in this instance would be creative non-fiction. It might be a good idea to extract a standalone section or chapter from a memoir-in-progress which you could develop into an essay. Essentially, the same rule would apply to a novel extract: the piece you submit should be able to be read, understood and enjoyed without further context.

What happened to the Featured Poets slot?

We are not taking submissions for the Featured Poets slot for the May 2023 window, but fear not, the slot will re-open for entries in November 2023.

How do I know when my work is ready to submit?

We know that many of our submitters, particularly newer writers, worry so much about sending in unpolished pieces that they feel unable to properly evaluate their work. First thing's first: it is rare for a fully finished piece to come in, and the editor expects to work with you to make your story/essay/poem the best that it can be. As outlined above, the editorial process can be light and quick on occasion, but equally a piece of work can go through multiple drafts as it's developed for publication. So don't assume that your story, essay or poem will be rejected if it is not perfect.

At the same time, we think it's important for all involved (and most importantly yourself) that you've taken your piece as far as you think/know you can. This includes reading, re-reading, drafting, and re-drafting.

Here are some things that might help:

- Have you read your piece aloud? Often, we can most easily identify problems in the text — with the rhythm, with repetition or unlikely dialogue — when we hear them (especially if we've been staring at them on a page for a long time!).
- Have you asked a trusted reader for feedback? A good reader is invaluable — someone who is constructive and positive about your ambitions, but who cares enough to give useful feedback... in other words, someone who won't just tell you what you want to hear for an easy life!
- Have you checked your spelling and grammar? We don't expect pieces to be perfect – mistakes absolutely happen — but we do want to feel confident that you have put as much care into your piece as you hope to receive from us.
- Have you read our submissions guidelines carefully? There is no point in wasting your valuable time sending in something unsuitable (for example, work previously published elsewhere, or fairy stories for children).
- Have you read Julian Gough's spot-on *Stinging Fly* essay on editing your own work? You'll find it [here](#).

How do I find trusted readers who might give me feedback?

This is obviously easier said than done. Sometimes, friends or family members are brilliant for reading our work and giving useful feedback, but sometimes they might not like reading, or are just too kind-hearted to offer criticism, or just don't share our interests in subject or writing style. If you're relying on a family member or friend to read your work, it's a good idea to assure them that you're keen to hear where you might improve, as well as where you've succeeded. Writers groups or workshops can also be useful for building a community. [The Irish Writers Centre](#) is a fantastic resource for courses, writers groups, and practical support. And at *The Stinging Fly*, we have a workshop programme aimed at helping writers develop their practice — you can find the details [here](#).

What kind of work is *The Stinging Fly* interested in? What should I write about to have a chance of publication?

We don't look for specific styles or subjects here at *The Stinging Fly*; we want to read what excites you, not what you think will excite us.

Is there any point resubmitting work that has been rejected before?

If you were given editorial feedback and encouraged to submit again, or if you feel that the piece has been significantly reworked and improved, then yes, you should submit it again.

I'm previously unpublished. Is there any point in my submitting my work?

Yes, of course! Publishing new writers is literally [the reason we exist!](#) Many of the writers we publish have never been published before. Our [latest issue](#) is dedicated to writers we have not till now published, and among them are seven, across all disciplines, publishing their debut pieces.