



## **2023 Collins Writing Contest - Frequently Asked Questions**

(Last updated February 23, 2022)

- Why can't I submit a handwritten story?
  - Stories must be readable for our judges, as they will be reading dozens of entries.
  - Authors must have a digital copy of their story to submit if their story is chosen as one of the contest winners.
- Do I really have to double-space my story?
  - Yes. Double-spacing improves readability, which is important because our judges will be reading dozens of entries.
- Can I type my child's story?
  - Yes, you may type your child's story, but you may not correct the grammar or plot points while transcribing it. You may, however, correct your child's spelling.
- Can I transcribe the story told to me by my dyslexic friend/child?
  - Yes, but you may not correct the grammar, nor any plot points while transcribing it.
  - You may help edit the story by reading sections back to the author and transcribing the changes, but the editing process must be author-directed.
- Can I work together with someone to write a story?
  - GPPL expects stories to be the work of a single author.
- Can I workshop my story online?
  - GPPL expects stories to be the work of a single author.
- Can I enter a one-word story?
  - Yes, but GPPL does not recommend taking this approach.
- Can I submit a story in a language other than English?
  - Our judges must be able to read every entry in their category to judge them fairly, and unfortunately, we cannot guarantee our judges will also be fluent in languages other than English.
- How do I count my story's words? Do I exclude one- and two-letter words?
  - Please use the word count supplied by your word processing program.
- Why can't I put my name on my story?
  - All stories will be judged anonymously to ensure fairness.
- How will you keep track of my entry if my name isn't on it?



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- The contest organizer will label each story and its entry form with a code ("A5", for example) to ensure that each entry is attributed to the correct author.
- What does "previously unpublished" mean?
  - Previously unpublished means that your story has not been shared with the public.
    - If your story has already appeared in print form (in a book, magazine, etc.), entered in a contest, handed in as a school assignment, or has been posted online where it can be read by the public, it is a previously published work.
  - This rule is to ensure that the story is the work of the submitting author, the story hasn't been improved by others who have read the work, and that there are no legal obstacles preventing GPPL from publishing winning stories in the anthology at the end of the contest.
- Can I submit a story I have self-published?
  - Self-published works do not meet the above criteria for previously unpublished works, and may not be submitted.
- Can I enter a story I wrote for the Collins Writing Contest in a previous year?
  - Stories that have been submitted previously in whole or part may not be re-entered.
- Can my story include characters from a book or show I like?
  - Entries must be original work and include original characters, settings, and plots.
- Can I use real people in my story?
  - Please use original characters in your story.
- Can I e-mail you my story?
  - GPPL requires print copies to distribute to contest judges, and it is not practical for our staff members to print hundreds of contest entries.
  - Please submit a printout of your story along with a complete entry form to the Children's Information Desk on the second floor of GPPL.
- I typed my story in Google Docs. Can I send you the link to enter the contest or to submit my winning story?
  - GPPL requires print copies to distribute to contest judges, and winners must submit their stories in a format that prevents future changes by the author once submitted.



- Unfortunately, a story contained in Google Docs does not meet those requirements.
- I wrote my story in Pages on my Mac – can you accept that file if I win?
  - Microsoft Word cannot edit .pages files. Please save your story as a .doc, .docx, .odt, or .rtf file to ensure you can submit the file if you are chosen as a winner.
- Can I submit my story as a .pdf file if I win?
  - Microsoft Word cannot edit .pdf files. Please save your story as a .doc, .docx, .odt, or .rtf file to ensure you can submit the file if you are chosen as a winner.
- A staff member flipped through my story when I submitted it – that means it’s okay, right?
  - GPPL staff members cannot ensure every story complies with the full set of contest rules at the time of accepting entries. Authors must ensure they have followed the contest rules when preparing their submission.
- Something came up – can I submit my story late?
  - The entry deadline is firm; GPPL encourages authors to plan to submit their story well in advance of the entry deadline.
- I live outside of Grande Prairie and plan to mail my entry to you. Does the same deadline apply to the postmark on my entry?
  - GPPL must receive the story by Monday, February 28 at 8:00 pm.
  - Authors submitting a story by mail are encouraged to do so well in advance.
- I made a mistake – can I re-submit my story?
  - We will not accept re-submissions because GPPL staff members cannot guarantee the revised version was written and submitted by the author of the original story.
- I had my students all write entries for the contest. Can I submit them together?
  - Yes, provided that...
    - Your students gave permission for their stories to be entered,
    - Each story is accompanied by a completed entry form **with the student’s contact information, not your own**, and
    - The individual entries all comply with the full rules of the Collins Writing Contest.
- Can I use a pen name when entering the contest?



- You may include a pen name alongside your legal name on the contest entry form, to be used if your story is selected as a winner or honourable mention.
- Pen names must resemble real names, and may not contain obscene language.
- Can I include mature content in my story?
  - Yes, but GPPL suggests limiting mature content to things that can be shown in an R-rated (MPAA) or 18A (CHVRS) movie.
- My story was selected as a winner, but I'd like to make some changes before I submit the digital copy. Is that okay?
  - The judges' decision was based on your story as it was submitted to them.
  - Winning authors must submit a digital copy that is identical to the story read by the judges.
  - PLEASE DO NOT EDIT YOUR STORY.
- This year's theme is really cool! Can I use it as the title of my story?
  - First, thank you!
  - Second, please use a title as unique as your story – that way, judges won't be confused when discussing multiple stories with very similar titles.
- Can my story be about something that really happened?
  - By definition, short stories are works of fiction.
  - You are welcome to use a true story for inspiration, or as a jumping-off point, but the rest of the story should be your original creation.
- Can I include a link to a webpage with additional content?
  - All stories must be self-contained, submitted in a format the author cannot edit after submission, and able to be reproduced accurately in the print anthology.
  - Unfortunately, webpages containing additional content would not meet those criteria.
- Can I include illustrations with my story?
  - Please do not include illustrations.
  - Entries are judged solely on the author's words, and our contest coordinator does not have the resources to ensure that illustrations could be reproduced accurately in the print anthology.
- I found a really cool font – can I use it for my story and have it printed in that font if it wins?



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- All stories must be readable by our judges, and we strongly recommend using a fairly standard font (Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman, etc.) when submitting your story.
- Unfortunately, it is not feasible for GPPL to license custom fonts for individual stories prior to publication, so all stories will be reproduced using a single standard font.
- Can my story have chapters?
  - Generally, short stories should not have chapters.
- What e-mail address should I use? Can I use my school e-mail address?
  - Please put an e-mail address on your entry form that is checked regularly and belongs to you or a parent.
- How are winners contacted?
  - GPPL staff members will contact winners by phone, then by e-mail if necessary, starting **Friday, April 7, 2023**
- When and where will the winners be announced?
  - GPPL will announce winners on its website at [www.gppl.ca](http://www.gppl.ca) and through GPPL's social media channels after the winners have been contacted.
  - Please do not contact GPPL to ask if the winners have been announced yet.