Clarion West

Novel Writing Workshop Submission Guidelines

Eligibility

- **Age**: Must be 18 or over by January 2027.
- **Education requirement:** None. We've had several students with no college education and several with PhDs.
- **English**: Must be able to read stories in English and write in English (or translate your writing into English).
- **Time commitment:** We expect all participants to attend the weekly classes held Monday evenings Pacific Time, from March to May and September to November, and meet one-on-one with the instructor once a month.

Application materials

You will need to complete the application form, which gives us an idea of who you are as a writer, what you are looking to get out of this program, and basic logistical information.

We also ask for a sample of your writing, preferably relating to the novel project you would like to complete during this workshop. This sample should be anonymized, unpublished, and should not have been edited by a professional editor. It should fit one of the following styles:

1. Your novel pitch and opening three chapters, OR
2. Three opening chapters and a sense of where your book is going, OR
3. First chapter, plus an outline and synopsis, and writing sample from other work, including but not limited to a script, poetry, related short story/novella.

Note: You may add or substitute a screenplay, script or other original format if this is an adapted work.

Click here for an example of how to write a pitch. Your pitch should be only 1-2 sentences!

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Word count: because the options for submission vary greatly we estimate this at about 5,000–10,000 words and ask that you send no more than 10,000 words of your project. Please do not submit your entire manuscript. There is no need to max out the wordcount.

Note: Your outline, synopsis or other planning may change over the course of the workshop. We just want to see where you're starting from!

If you have applied in the past, please apply with a new project.

Format: Please follow proper manuscript format (modern manuscript format is fine!). Please use a 12-point font. We prefer Courier or Courier New, but will accept Times fonts. Your manuscript should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Set your margins flush left and do not justify the text.

We prefer PDF documents, but also accept .doc, .docx, and .rtf files.

File name: We want your writing samples to be anonymous, so please make sure your name is not in the title. You may use the title of your story and the year. Example: GalaxyQuest2025. Please do not use your name.

How many files should I prepare? One file for your writing sample(s). If you are sending two stories or an excerpt and a synopsis, they should both be included in the same document.

What if I send the wrong file? You can update your application if it's been less than 3 days since submission. Otherwise, let us know ASAP. We may have already forwarded your work to our readers, but it still may be possible to catch it before they read it. Unfortunately, if they've read it, it's too late. None of our readers have time to read revisions.

Contact information: Your contact information must include your phone number, email address, and mailing address. (For international folks, there will be options to provide phone numbers we can contact via apps like WhatsApp or Signal.) We do not call applicants without first reaching out by email.

Plagiarism and generative AI: We want your own, original work. See our full policy as part of our Integrity & Ethics Policy here.

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Clarion West has a zero tolerance policy for plagiarized submissions. If a portion or the entirety of a submitted work is found to have been plagiarized, the application will be rejected outright with no refund of fees.

Short Answer Questions: You'll be asked to provide short answer (250 words or less) to the following questions:

- Why do you want to attend the Novel Writing Workshop, and what do you hope to gain from this experience?
- Where do you feel you are in your writing practice and writing career?
- What, if any, experience do you have critiquing or being critiqued by others?
- This is an intimate workshop setting, where cohesive group dynamics and chemistry are essential to a positive experience for all. What skills, life experiences, or perspectives do you bring into these types of spaces as a reader, classmate, or critical thinker? How have you have contributed to a tight-knit community in the past?
- If desired, please describe any challenges or issues you've experienced in previous workshop settings, or that you foresee in this workshop setting.
- Tell us about your planned story. What styles, genres, or tones inspire you? If you have an idea of tonally, structurally, or otherwise similar books, feel free to share.
- What books published in the last five years interest or inspire you?
- What do you hope to discover about this book or your writing process through this program?
- Why do you write? What does "success" as a writer look like to you?
- Is there anything else you'd like your instructors and/or peers to know about you?
- After reading the Integrity & Ethics Policy, please use this space to share anything you'd like us to know that hasn't already been covered, particularly as it relates to your interactions with generative AI. This might include how you use translation tools, your work history, or other potential conflicts of interest. Disclosure in this section does not eliminate you from the application process. Rather, it's a way for us to understand the make-up of a potential class and create a cohort that will be able to form long-term connections with one another.

Do letters of recommendation help me get in? No. We do not require or accept letters of recommendation. Please do not send any additional materials other than the requested materials.

Additional information: Feel free to add an explanatory note for your scholarship needs. However, please don't send us copies of official papers — just explain your situation.

Application Fees: Our application fee structure uses sliding scale rates that follow our financial aid policy and allow applicants to choose the rate that best meets their needs for the duration of the application cycle:

$15 Helping Hands discount
$35 Supporting rate
$60 Sustaining rate

You may also follow the directions on the form to ask for an application fee waiver.

Contact us if you need help: Don't wait until the deadline, please contact us early at novelworkshop@clarionwest.org.