

Guide

How to Use Winning Writers' Best Free Literary Contests Database

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How to sign up for The Best Free Literary Contests Database

To get access to The Best Free Literary Contests, just send a short request to info@winningwriters.com. We'll add you to our list of subscribers.

Subscribing to the Database will also sign you up for our free monthly newsletter. It links you to a fresh batch of free contests every month, plus calls for submissions, resources for writers, and award-winning poetry and prose. You can unsubscribe any time. We will never share your email address with anyone else.

How to log into The Best Free Literary Contests Database

If you already have an account, go to winningwriters.com/free and click "Login here". Then enter your email address into the "Email" field and press "Login".

I'm lost! How can I get back to The Best Free Literary Contests Database?

You can get back to the Database at any time by typing winningwriters.com/free into your navigation bar and pressing enter. You can also hit "The Best Free Literary Contests" button in the menu at the top of every page on our website.

What do you mean by a "Neutral" contest?

We rate each contest as Neutral, Recommended, or Highly Recommended. A **Neutral** contest is one that we believe is legitimate but does not confer a high degree of benefit or prestige. Our attitude towards it is "Neutral". These contests can offer good opportunities to emerging writers.

How does a contest qualify as "Recommended" or "Highly Recommended"?

Contests are marked **Recommended** or **Highly Recommended** when they offer a high degree of benefit or prestige. These contests tend to be more competitive. Winning one is a significant honor.

What is a "spotlight" contest?

We like to spotlight contests that are particularly appropriate for emerging, intermediate, or advanced writers. It's a way to help you choose a contest when faced with selecting among dozens or hundreds of contests.

I don't live in the US. How can I find contests I can enter?

On our Search Free Contests page, you can search for contests that are based in a particular country. You can also specify international contests in our Geographic Eligibility menu.

How come my searches pull up contests with past deadlines?

When searching, if you don't specify a range of deadlines that excludes the past, you may see contests with past deadlines in your results. We want you to know these contests exist in case you want to plan to enter them in the future.

When will you update contest profiles with their current deadlines?

We generally update the profile for each contest 6-10 weeks before its deadline. Earlier than that we find that some contests are still changing their rules. A good strategy is to enter a contest about 2-4 weeks ahead of its deadline. You avoid the mad rush at the end while leaving time to correct any problems with your submission.

I perform a search and it pulls up few, if any, contests. What should I do?

You may have put too many constraints on your search. Try searching on just one or two criteria.

How can I use your information to improve my odds of winning?

A good strategy is to monitor our [What's New column](#) and our [Bluesky feed](#) for new contests and contests that extend their deadlines. Consider entering contests we have marked as "Emerging Spotlight". Search for contests that have a Recommendation Level of "Neutral". If a contest is named after someone, do some research on that person to see if they are associated with particular styles or themes. [Screenshots of all 4 resources will be shown]

I still need more help!

If you have a question that wasn't answered by this write-up, you can reach out for help through the form on our ["Help me use The Best Free Literary Contests Database" page](#).