

Win a Short Story Contest!

Contributed by Deborah Owen
Tuesday, 14 August 2012
Last Updated Tuesday, 14 August 2012

Want to be the next winner of a short story contest? Learn what writing contest judges look for in a winning entry. Win a Short Story Contest!

What do judges look for when they read a short story entry? I helped judge a contest last year and I can tell you.

** The submission must follow ALL of the guidelines!

** A catchy title that lures the reader.

** A snappy first sentence that opens in the middle of an action scene.

** The story must hold interest from beginning to end. No sagging middle.

** Use action verbs.

** Judges love an unpredictable ending that resolves all the loose ends.

** There are no new stories. Only old stories told with new angles. In other words – originality.

** Be creative in the way you phrase your sentences. (By the way, third person, past tense stores are the most popular these days.)

** Avoid verbiage (wordiness), ‘dead words,’ (such as really, just, even, some, most, often, even, more, most – words that are not definitive), too many prepositional phrases per sentence, (no more than three, and no more than two in consecutive order).

** Style – the way in which you express yourself. Call upon every experience you know or have imagined. Call on your knowledge of other people’s experiences, but mix facts with fiction so the real person is unrecognizable.

** Technique – id hoe you structure your story. Does it use flashbacks? Is it fast or slow paced? How does the narration balance with the dialogue? Do the characters feel like real people?

** Does the reader feel satisfied with the ending? If you’re telling a real story, you’ll always have to manufacture a good ending.

** Let’s end where we began – FOLLOW the GUIDELINES.

When you edit, have a writer friend (not a family member) read it. Listen to their suggestions. On your last edit, read the story aloud and replace all verbs with the most action packed verbs you can dream up.

Do all of these things, and I guarantee you a good chance of winning. Good luck!

About the Author:

Read about our short story contest for beginners at <http://www.CreativeWritingInstitute.com>. And hey – don't forget to click "like" before you leave! Help us spread the word. The contest closes 8/31/12