

TopWrite Application Guidelines - 2020

Finding a path into a career in writing can be difficult and daunting. TopWrite aims to assist young, aspiring writers by providing affordable access to the Swanwick Writers' Summer School, with the intention of facilitating their aspirations through the courses on offer and the company of experienced writers. If you are such a writer and know that you would make good use of an opportunity like this, use the below guidelines to help you to make a successful application.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for a place at the Swanwick Writers' Summer School through the TopWrite scheme:

- You must be **aged between 18 and 30** (inclusive) at the start of the Summer School (8 August 2020).
- You must **demonstrate a commitment to writing** as an ongoing pursuit or career. You will do this through a personal statement, a CV, a sample of writing and a supporting reference.
- You must **not have participated in TopWrite** in a previous year.
- You must be at **an early stage in your writing career**. (For example, if you are already earning a reliable income from your published works, TopWrite is not aimed at you – though the Summer School certainly is: do consider booking a place.)

*Please also note that it is a condition of your acceptance of a place through TopWrite that you will **provide feedback** on your experience and what you have gained from it, after the Summer School. This will be used by the School to evaluate the TopWrite scheme and to improve it in future years.*

Personal statement

Tell us, in **up to 500 words**, **why you are applying** for TopWrite and **why you should be given a place**. Consider the aims of the scheme, show **what you hope to gain** from the course and explain **why this opportunity is important** to you right now. You need to **show your commitment** to writing (see Eligibility criteria, above).

Your statement may take any form you wish, though – needless to say – must be non-fiction!

CV

Craft a **one-page curriculum vitae focused on yourself as a writer**. This should include any and all experiences and achievements that you consider relevant to your identity as a creative writer. These might not be limited purely to writing; perhaps you have other skills and experiences that also testify to your creativity, for instance. (There is no need to repeat age, address etc already covered on the application form.) Naturally, your personal statement is likely to cover and develop some of the same material as your CV.

Example writing

This is a piece of **your own creative writing** which may take **any form** you wish, or more than one form – ideally, whatever you most enjoy writing.

For novels, short stories, flash fiction; non-fiction; screenplays, radio plays or stage plays: submit **up to 1,000 words**. This might be an extract from a longer work, an entire short piece or a collection of briefer works.

If submitting poetry, a **small collection of a poems** would be appropriate – probably **around 6**, but make a judgement based on their length (and respect the 1,000 word limit).

Note that TopWrite is not a competition. Places are not allocated based on whose writing is 'best'. Your writing will contribute to the impression of we form of you as a committed aspiring writer.

Reference

Your referee must be someone with **first-hand experience of your dedication to writing**. They must support your application through a short written statement. If you are involved in a writing-related course or group, then a tutor or co-ordinator from that group would be an appropriate choice. Otherwise, a relative or friend could be used, or perhaps a former teacher or writing partner.

The referee's statement should be no more than around 250 words long. It should state, clearly and convincingly:

- a) that the referee **considers you to be eligible** for TopWrite (based on the above criteria).
- b) **why** the referee considers you to be **likely to benefit significantly** from TopWrite.

How TopWrite fits into Swanwick

If your application is successful, you will find yourself as one of a small group of TopWriters at Swanwick 2020. The TopWrite group will be welcomed and shown around the venue by the TopWrite coordinators (Alexandra McDermott and Jonathan Higgs). Support, should any be needed, is available throughout the week from them and from the Summer School's volunteer ambassadors.

However, overwhelmingly, **TopWriters have the same experience as all first-time attenders of the Summer School**. That is to say, there is no separate programme of events or extra layer of organisation applying to TopWrite: **it will be completely up to you to engage in the week and to make the most of the opportunities on offer**.

Previous years have shown that TopWriters who attend courses with a serious desire to learn and to develop their craft, who readily converse with other delegates at the Summer School and who participate with enthusiasm and respect, reliably end the week delighted with what they have gained from it. Please bear this in mind as you apply: the Summer School is very much what you make of it. The application process exists to help us ensure that all of our TopWriters are genuinely enthusiastic writers who will make the very most they can of the week – and who will thereby gain the most they can, too.

If you sincerely believe that this describes you, then don't waste a moment: start your application now!