

NOVEL FAIR 2025

Frequently Asked Questions

About the competition

When will Novel Fair 2025 take place?

The two-day Novel Fair event will take place in February 2025. Exact dates are tbc.

When do submissions open?

Submissions open on Sunday 1 September 2024

When is the deadline for submissions?

Monday 30 September 2024

Will I get a publishing deal if I win Novel Fair?

The winning 12 writers will be awarded with a place at Novel Fair 2025. At the Fair, winners will get the opportunity to pitch their novel to a selection of top publishers and agents. Over the past 13 years, 42 Novel Fair winners have gone on to publish novels. Often, their journey to publication began through the connections and experiences they had at the IWC Novel Fair. However, there is no guarantee that winning Novel Fair will lead to you signing with an agent and/or a publishing deal.

What happens to Novel Fair winners who don't sign with a publisher or agent as a result of the Fair?

While a significant amount of Novel Fair winners do go on to sign with publishers or agents, this isn't the only benefit to winning Novel Fair. Previous winners have used their success at the IWC Novel Fair to help them progress further, such as gaining entry into prestigious Creative Writing MFA programmes to advance their careers in the arts sector. We like to stress that Novel Fair is just one step (and a very early one at that) on the long journey of a successful writing life. For example Aingeala Flannery won Novel Fair in 2018 with a novel that did not go on to be published but then her debut, *The Amusements* was published in 2022 (And went on to win the Kerry Group Novel of the Year award!).

If I'm selected to take part in the Novel Fair, will I receive feedback on my 10,000 words before presenting the finished work to agents/publishers?

In preparation for Novel Fair, winners will participate in a one-day workshop where they will learn how to craft the ideal pitch and what to expect from their encounters at Novel Fair. The workshop will be facilitated by the Novel Fair judges and a previous Novel Fair winner.

What will happen at the Fair?

Each shortlisted writer will be pitch their novels to top Irish and international publishers and literary agents, giving novelists the opportunity to bypass the slush pile, pitch their ideas and place their synopsis and sample chapters directly into the hands of industry professionals. These encounters will take the form of a series of 15-minute meetings with publishers and agents where the 12 winners are given the opportunity to pitch their novels.

About my submission

Do you accept Memoir, Autobiography, True Stories?

No, we only accept works of fiction in the novel form of at least 50,000 words. We accept hybrid forms of genre and fiction/nonfiction hybrid works, including autofiction/experimental memoir e.g. fiction heavily based on real life. Please note, if you are shortlisted for novel fair, we will request to see a further 50,000 words .

Do you accept Novellas, Short Stories or Poetry?

No, we only accept works of fiction in the novel form of at least 50,000 words.

How much of my novel should I submit?

Submit 10,000 words (-/+ 10%)

Can I enter with my novel of under 50,000 words?

No. While we appreciate that the novel is a malleable form and that some classics of the form such as *The Great Gatsby* fall under our 50,000 word limit, our guidelines are designed to reflect the interests of the publishers and agents who attend the Novel Fair and represent the industry standards more generally.

How long should my synopsis be?

300 words (-/+ 10%)

I've never written a synopsis before, what should I do?

In terms of style, past Novel Fair Judge Alan McMonagle recommends breaking it down into three short paragraphs: *“Keep it double spaced. Use short, declarative sentences.”* It is important to remember that your synopsis is different from the blurb you would read on the back of a published book. Your task with the synopsis is to summarise your novel in its entirety including every pertinent twist and turn. The goal with the Synopsis is to accurately transmit the entirety of your 50+ thousand word novel in only 300 words. Summarising your novel in so few words can be challenging and as Alan says, *“it might take a few runs to get it right. Actually scratch that – it will take a few runs to get it right.”*

Can I submit random chapters from my novel?

In most cases, we advise writers to submit three consecutive chapters. This is to help the judges get a proper sense of the plot and/or characterisation. However in some cases this may not be appropriate and it may be best to submit a different selection from your novel. For example 2019 winner Alice Lyons had this to say when we interviewed her last year, *“I included a big chunk of the beginning to orient the reader, and then I chose a chunk from the New Jersey section and the Irish section so they (the judges) could see the geographic reach and the various ways of conjuring place.”* You can read the rest of our interview with Alice [here](#).

Is the entry fee refundable?

No refunds will be given.

How can I pay for entry to Novel Fair?

You can pay the entry fee when you submit your novel online using submittable.

Will I hear from anyone after I submit?

You will receive an automatic email response when your payment and manuscript have been received. All applicants will be notified on their application outcome by mid-December 2024.

Why does my submission cost 55 euros?

While we are aware that €55 is a comparatively expensive entry fee for a writing competition we believe that Novel Fair is a singular opportunity on the literary calendar and offers a unique chance for emerging writers to gain an insight into the publishing industry. We must

also stress that the majority of money received through Novel Fair entry fees goes towards paying our judges, as well as covering the rest of the vast administrative costs that go into running a large competition like Novel Fair.

I can't afford to pay the submission fee. Are there any free places?

Each year, we offer 20 free submission places for writers. More details on how to receive a free submission will be available in September 2024.

Are there any rules on our to format my text for submission?

We recommend that applicants format their manuscripts in a standard clear font (e.g. Times New Roman), font size 12, Double spaced with page numbers. The competition is judged anonymously. The applicant's name must not appear anywhere on the synopsis or manuscript.

My novel isn't based in Ireland. Will the publishers and agents be interested in my novel?

We really can't say what will be of interest to the publishers and agents that attend the Novel Fair. We do have international representation at the Fair (UK and the US), however the majority of publishers and agents who attend Novel Fair work in the Irish publishing industry.

Eligibility

Can I enter if I have self-published a book before?

If the applicant has a self-published Novel with an ISBN, the applicant can apply as long as they meet ALL below conditions which the applicant must be able to provide evidence of upon request:

- ✓ The sample submitted to the Irish Writers Centre Novel Fair is not from the published novel (i.e. the Irish Centre Novel Fair will only accept new, original work).
- ✓ The applicant has a maximum of one self-published Novel with an ISBN. The self-published novel must not have sold more than 1,000 copies through any medium (i.e. print or e-book).
- ✓ In the process of publication the applicant has not successfully engaged with or had access to a professional publisher, distributor or editor.

- ✓ The self-published novel has not been reviewed professionally (i.e. by any recognised print or broadcast media, or online review).

I have an agent/representation, can I still apply?

No, the competition is limited to unpublished novelists who have not signed with any agents or publishers. Applicants who have already had a novel accepted by a publisher, or have previously had a novel published, will not be eligible.

Can I enter if I have had a short story or an essay published in an anthology?

Yes, in this case you would be eligible. As long as you haven't published a novel in its entirety.

I have published an academic monograph, can I still apply?

Yes, in this case you would be eligible. As long as you haven't published a novel in its entirety.

I have published a non-fiction book, can I still apply?

Yes, in this case you would be eligible. As long as you haven't published a novel in its entirety.

I've written a novel for children. Am I allowed to submit it to the Novel Fair?

Yes, in this case you would be eligible. As long as you haven't published a novel in its entirety. However in order to manage your expectations we must flag that, while you may be selected as a winner of Novel Fair, the majority of Publishers and Agents who attend Novel Fair are primarily involved in Fiction that is geared towards an adult audience.

I have submitted to the Novel Fair before, can I submit again?

Yes, you can submit again. Some Novel Fair winners have been highly commended or runners-up in previous years.

Can I submit more than one work in the same year?

No, we allow only one submission per writer per year.

Is the Novel Fair for Irish novelists only?

Entries are welcome from anywhere in the world, however, in order to be eligible, applicants must be available to attend the two days of Novel Fair

My project is a non-fiction/fiction hybrid, can I submit?

We accept hybrid forms of genre and fiction/nonfiction hybrid works, including autofiction/experimental memoir e.g. fiction heavily based on real life. Please note, if you are shortlisted for novel fair, we will request to see a further 50,000 words.

Will my work be accepted if I used AI to write parts of it?

Your submission must be your own work. Writers may not make Novel Fair submissions that have used AI in their creation, whether in the outlining or writing of the manuscript. We have taken this stance on AI to reflect most publishing contracts that require authors to warrant that the work submitted will be original to them. The inclusion of AI-generated text in the final manuscript will violate this warranty, as the text is not considered “original” to the author. For more information on AI best practices for authors, please see Authors Guild resource [here](#).

Do you have a question about your application? Please email novelfair@irishwriterscentre.ie for further enquiries.