

ENTRY# _____ TITLE _____

First, follow the rules you'll find on the checklists, also available for download. Once you've mastered the technical side, the most important thing for this contest is the writing. This is a sample of the score sheet that readers will use to score author's work. Questions may change before implementation, but this is the general idea.

Each question below will be worth 1 - 4 points, with 4 being the most.

There will be variations on the questions for Non-Fiction - Memoir, Short Story, and Adult Short Topic (article, essay, memoir) but the basic idea is the same.

1. **Synopsis/Plot:** The main purpose of a synopsis is to provide a summary of an entire novel. The plot is the story narrative, the sequence of events where each plot point adds up to a story.

1. Does it include a beginning, middle, and end?
2. Is there a clear antagonist and protagonist or challenge?
3. Is the story about what the character wants? Is it found in the first few pages?

2. **Viewpoint:** All stories are told using a consistent point of view, such as first person, third person, or omniscient.

1. Does the reader understand what the character is feeling?
2. In multiple point of view stories: does it move between POV's easily? In stories that don't shift POVs: Does the story stay in the POV without accidental shifts?
3. Does the point of view pull you into the story?

3. **Characterization:** The goal of a writer is to present well-rounded believable characters that don't fall into tropes or stereotypes.

1. Does the reader get a strong sense of who the main character is, and what they want?
2. Do the characters' actions/reactions move the story forward?

4. **Dialogue/Internal Narrative**: Dialogue and Internal Narrative are a tool writers use to advance plot, express character traits, and create white space in a manuscript.

1. Does the dialogue/internal narrative feel authentic and distinct, character by character?
2. Do the dialogue tags and accompanying nonverbal cues add something to how the reader interprets the dialogue?

5. **Conflict/Tension/Pacing**: Conflict is essential to any story. It should include internal and external dilemmas that are high stakes for the characters.

1. Are character reactions to the conflict consistent with the character?
2. Was the overall conflict of the story made clear?

6. **Hooks/Transitions**: A writer needs to include a good hook in a story as well as in each scene, providing a smooth transition to the next scene.

1. Is the opening (hook) strong enough to engage the reader?
2. Are questions raised that make the reader want to keep reading?
3. Do the transitions between scenes encourage you to keep reading?

7. **Setting/Description**: Setting and description should include the location, time, weather, environment and other details to ground a reader.

1. Does the author establish time, mood, and atmosphere?
2. Is the setting rich in details using at least some of the five senses?
3. Is the setting used to pull the reader in?

8. **Voice/Tone/Style** : Tone is the feeling or mood of the book and should match the genre. Voice is the consistent tone in which the story is written.

1. Is the voice, tone, and language appropriate for the genre?
2. Is there an appropriate balance of showing and telling?

9. **Mechanics** It's important for authors to put their best foot forward, which includes minimizing grammatical errors and following formatting directions in submission guidelines.

1. Does the author demonstrate an understanding of grammar (which order the words are written and what form of words they use)?
2. Has the author edited the piece enough to make it an easy read?
3. Does the entry follow the guidelines of the contest?

10. **Details** Leaving the right amount of description partially up to the reader can allow them to use their own imagination and make reading a more immersive experience.

1. Are adjectives and adverbs used to add to the story in an appropriate way?
2. Are there just the right amount of details to allow the reader to imagine the story to their liking?