



How to Write Winning Short Stories: A practical guide to writing stories that win contests and get selected for publication

Nancy Sakaduski

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How to Write Winning Short Stories is a concise and practical guide that includes developing a theme and premise, choosing a title, creating characters, crafting realistic dialogue, bringing the setting to life, working with structure, and editing. Submission and marketing advice is also provided. The author, who manages an annual short story competition, offers guidance on manuscript formatting, submission options, contest entry, and how to get the attention of a publisher or contest judge. The book is perfect for anyone who is considering writing a short story. It will give beginning writers a practical playbook for getting started and help experienced writers build their skills. Based on the author's experiences running an annual short story contest and working with dozens of writers to help them improve and perfect their stories, combined with extensive research (the bibliography contains 80+ sources), here, in one concise little guide, is the best advice and most successful tips for writing winning short stories. Each chapter concludes with a handy checklist for reviewing what was learned and checking stories for possible areas of improvement. Contents • What Is a “Winning” Short Story? • Why Short Stories? o Getting Started o The Market o Choosing What to Write o Preparing to Write • The Importance of Story o The Beginning o The Central Conflict o Details, Details, Details o The Ending • Premise and Theme • Structure o Time Frame, Sequence, and Transitions o Making a Scene o Flashbacks o Pacing • Setting • Characters o Choosing Characters o Character Names o Attributes/Descriptions • Telling the Story o Point of View o The Viewpoint Character o Voice • Dialogue o Creating Realistic Dialogue o Dialogue among Characters o Unspoken Thoughts • The Title • Editing o The Editing Process o Self-Editing o Developmental Editing o Copyediting o Proofreading • Facts, Logic, and Lawyers o Fact-Checking o Logic o Legal Issues • Marketing Short Stories o Identifying Markets o Magazines o Anthologies o Contests and Awards o How to Submit o The “Wow Factor” o Repurposing Your Stories • Bibliography • Index

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