

# Askew's Foods Word on the Lake Writing Contest

## 2026 Rules and Guidelines

The 2026 Askew's Word on the Lake Writing Contest is open to all writers around the world who are eighteen years and older. All contest entries must be original material whose copyright resides with the submitter, and cannot have been previously published (including self-published), be currently accepted for publication, be a current entry in another contest, or have been a winner in another contest prior to the deadline. The contest opens **January 2, 2026**. All submissions must be emailed (paper submissions are not accepted) and received by the deadline of **midnight Pacific Time, January 31, 2026**.

Contest entries are submitted and judged in three categories:

- **Fiction:** Up to 2,000 words
- **Nonfiction:** Up to 2,000 words
- **Poetry:** Maximum length of one page per poem; up to three poems can be submitted as a single entry

Only one entry per writer can be submitted to any category, but writers are free to submit different works in more than one category. Contest judges will be announced during the contest period.

### Prizes

The contest offers prizes for nine winners overall, thanks to the generosity of contest sponsor Askew's Foods:

- \$200 for First Place in each category (fiction, nonfiction, and poetry) and a 2026 festival registration package
- \$125 for Second Place in each category, plus a festival banquet package
- \$100 for Honourable Mention in each category, plus a festival banquet package

All winners will be listed on the festival website, and will have their winning entries published in the 2026 edition of the *Askew's Word on the Lake Anthology*. Everyone who enters the contest will receive a copy of the anthology in ebook format (epub, mobi, and PDF), and each contest winner also receives the anthology in print. The 2026 anthology and the anthologies from previous years will be available at the festival and online.

At the discretion of the contest coordinator, prizes in specific categories might not be awarded exactly as noted. All prizes must be accepted as offered. There are no cash substitutions for festival packages, and festival packages are not transferable.

### Theme and Content

The contest has no specific theme, so any topic or type of narrative is appropriate. We welcome literary explorations of difficult subjects, but encourage you to keep your work within the boundaries of something analogous to a film rated 14A or PG13, as opposed to 18A or Restricted. If you have any questions about where a specific work of yours might fall, feel free to ask (see "Questions" at the bottom of this document).

For the best sense of the types of writing that have been selected as winning entries in years past, pick up a copy of any *Askew's Word on the Lake Anthology*:

<https://wordonthelakewritersfestival.com/saw/writing-contest/the-askews-word-on-the-lake-anthology-2024/>

<https://wordonthelakewritersfestival.com/saw/writing-contest/the-askews-word-on-the-lake-anthology-2025/>

## **Previous Publication**

A work is considered to have been published before if it appears in print or ebook form, or is published online at an anthology website, the website of a creative collective, an online magazine, an online newspaper, a writing contest website, or any other website whose purpose is to have the work read by the public. Such works are **NOT** eligible for entry to the contest. Any entry found to have been previously published will be automatically disqualified, and your entry fee will not be refunded.

A work published on the author's own personal website or blog is considered to not have been published before, and is eligible for entry to the contest.

If your work has appeared online and you're not sure where it fits into these categories, drop us a line (see "Questions" at the bottom of this document).

## **AI-Written Works**

Entries making use of generative AI writing tools are **NOT** eligible for entry to the contest. The use of machine-learning proofing tools is acceptable as long as those tools make suggestions for your own revisions, but such tools can't be used to generate original text or revisions. Any entry created using generative AI writing tools will be automatically disqualified, and your entry fee will not be refunded.

## **Submission Instructions**

There are two parts to the submission process: your entry (sent by email), and the contest submission fee (made by Interac e-transfer, PayPal, or cheque).

If your entry has a title page, that title page must **NOT** have your name or any other identifying information on it. You can also just put the title of your fiction or nonfiction submission at the top of the first page. For poetry, each poem should have its title on its page. Make sure your name doesn't appear in your page headers or footers. (Anonymous judging is used to select the contest winners, meaning the judges can't know the name of the writer.)

The following "cover page" information should be put into the body of your email (do **NOT** send a separate cover page document):

- Your name, full mailing address, email address, and phone number. If you use a pen name, please enter the contest under your name and note your pen name. (This information is only ever used by the contest organizers and the contest mailing list. Word

on the Lake will never sell or share your personal details with any other organizations or third parties.)

- The category your work is entered into (fiction, nonfiction, or poetry).
- For fiction and nonfiction: the title of your entry and its word count.
- For poetry: the number of poems submitted (one to three) and the titles of each poem.
- Indicate how you're paying your submission fee (Interac e-transfer, PayPal, or cheque).

Additionally, your submission must meet our contest requirements:

- Your entry must be original material whose copyright resides with you.
- Your entry cannot have been previously published (including self-published), be currently accepted for publication, be a current entry in another contest, or have been a winner in another contest prior to the contest deadline.
- Entries cannot make use of generative AI writing tools. The use of proofing tools is acceptable as long as those tools make suggestions for your own revisions, but such tools can't be used to generate original text or revisions.
- Use standard manuscript format: 1-inch margins, double-spaced, and 12 point Arial or Times New Roman font. Poetry may be single-spaced.
- Your entry must be a Microsoft Word-compatible document (.doc, .docx, .otd, or .rtf format), sent as an email attachment. Entries sent in any other format (including PDF, plain text, within the body of the email, or on paper) are not accepted.
- No concrete poetry. Indents and lines that are centered or right-justified in your poems to direct the flow are fine, but concrete poetry doesn't translate well from the full-sized page you're writing on to the trade-paperback page size of the anthology.
- For poetry, please be aware that long lines will wrap with a hanging indent in the anthology. (If you're not sure what this means, have a look at previous editions of the anthology.)
- No graphics (including line breaks done as graphics). No page layout or floating text boxes. No hyperlinks.
- Poems must be sent as one document with page breaks, not as separate documents.
- For the file name of your submission document, use just the title of your story or nonfiction piece, or the title of your first poem—for example: "My Story.doc". Do not use your own name as part of the file name. Do not add "Word on the Lake," "Writing Contest," or any other extras as part of the file name.

**You must read and follow the above guidelines before submitting to the contest.**

**Submissions that don't meet the guidelines may be rejected.**

Use the subject line "Word on the Lake Writing Contest" for your entry email, and send it to: [WotLContest@gmail.com](mailto:WotLContest@gmail.com) by **midnight Pacific Time, January 31, 2026**. If you don't receive an email confirming that your submission was received within 48 hours, check your junk mail or spam folder. If the confirmation isn't there, send an inquiry email to that same email address.

**(If you've entered in previous years, please note the new email address for the Word on the Lake Writing Contest.)**

Each entry to the contest has a **\$15 Canadian** entry fee, one hundred percent of which goes directly to supporting the Word on the Lake Writers' Festival. Entries will not be considered without an entry fee. You can submit your entry fee by one of three methods:

- Interac e-transfer, using the email address [WotLContest@gmail.com](mailto:WotLContest@gmail.com).
- PayPal, using the email address [WotLContest@gmail.com](mailto:WotLContest@gmail.com), or paying through the contest web page: <https://wordonthelakewritersfestival.com/saw/writing-contest/>
- A cheque (Canadian banks only) made out to "Shuswap Association of Writers," with the memo note "Writing Contest" at the bottom, and mailed to:

Askew's Word on the Lake Writing Contest  
PO Box 1134, Salmon Arm, BC V1E 4P3

If your e-transfer or PayPal payment is coming from a different name than the name your entry is submitted under, please make a note of that in your entry email.

Please send your e-transfer or PayPal payment at about the same time as you send your submission. Sending your payment in days or weeks before you send your submission can make it look as if your submission email went astray, and makes it more difficult to process your payment information when your submission does come in.

If you're paying by cheque, it's all right if the cheque arrives after the entry deadline, but please make sure it's sent when your submission is sent. If we haven't received your cheque within two weeks of the deadline, we will contact you to arrange alternative payment, or your entry will be disqualified.

## **Notification of Winners**

Winners will be notified by March 15, 2026. Email entries and attachments will be deleted after the contest winners are announced.

## **Publication Rights**

By entering the contest, you acknowledge that if you are a contest winner, you grant the Shuswap Association of Writers one-time publication rights to your winning entry for the *Askew's Word on the Lake Anthology* in ebook and print. All other rights remain with you as the author and copyright holder. By entering the contest, you also acknowledge that if you are a contest winner, you grant the Shuswap Association of Writers the right to publish your name or pen name in the anthology and on the Shuswap Association of Writers website.

## **Questions**

For more information on the Word on the Lake Writers' Festival, see the festival website: [wordonthelakewritersfestival.com](http://wordonthelakewritersfestival.com). Any queries about the contest should be directed to [WotLContest@gmail.com](mailto:WotLContest@gmail.com) with "Writing Contest Questions" in the subject line of your email. We'll do our best to respond within 24 hours.

**(If you've entered in previous years, please note the new email address for the Word on the Lake Writing Contest.)**