



Pages From The Heart Contest Judging Guidelines

1. Judges will be assigned numbers to use as identification on score sheets and when entering comments on manuscript entries.
2. To comment within the manuscript, please use all capital letters, a different color font, highlight, or “track changes” within your word processing program. Return the manuscript along with this score sheet. No score sheets will be accepted by snail mail.
3. Please take a close look at the information the entrant provided on the Entry Cover Sheet. If you feel uncomfortable judging an entry that has a crossover into a genre you would prefer not to read, let your category coordinator know as soon as possible.
4. When you are finished judging the scoresheets, please remove your identifying information by doing the following:

If you save the document in Word 97-2003 format, you have the option at File | Options | Trust Center | Trust Center Settings | Privacy Options to “Remove personal information from file properties on save.” **Save, adding your Judge Number to the name of the file.**

If you save in Word 2010/2013 or Office 365 format, then you have to use File | Info | Prepare for Sharing: Check for Issues | Inspect Document: Document Properties and Personal Information | Remove All. **Save, adding your Judge Number to the name of the file.**

If you use Word for Mac: Please notify your Category Coordinator. Identifying information cannot be completely removed from the entry using Word for Mac. The file will need to be processed by contest personnel who use Word for PC and can remove your identifying information before distributing to judges or returning the judged entry to the author. **Save, adding your Judge Number to the name of the file.**

5. When saving the entry file, please enter your judge number after the entry number.

Example: The category coordinator will send you a file named:

UA-Para-5 Fifty Shades of Lust.doc

You will save as:

UA-Para-5 **J73** Fifty Shades of Lust.doc



6. If you recognize a manuscript you've been given to judge, please let the category coordinator or contest coordinator know and we'll switch it out.

Example: We feel Critique Group members and Beta Reading Group members should not be allowed to judge the entries of another member of the same group because they would recognize the author.

7. Always use friendly, rational language even if you did not like the entry. Try to provide constructive criticism.
8. Try to avoid unfriendly language such as: Hated it, Loathed it, Ridiculous, Imbecilic, Worst thing I've ever read, Offensive, Horrible, Please take an elementary English class, That character is too stupid to live.

Example of how to say the same thing with kindness: Use phrases like "Some readers might have problems with..."; "I had concerns about X because..."; "The first chapter might have more impact if..."; "Maybe you could try X or X"; "You might heighten the reader's bond with the protagonist if..."; "Readers might want to know about X at this point in the plot"; "I wonder what would happen if you tried X?"; "At this point in the plot, I became curious about X"; "This confuses me here because..."; and so on.

9. Even "I didn't care for this" is risky, depending on the reasons given. Stating personal preference as your rationale for downgrading a manuscript negates your authority as an open-minded and thoughtful judge. Give reasons beyond personal dislikes (see number 11 below). Moreover, the word "sucks" should be confined to vacuuming references, unless you loved it and you write, "It sucks that I can't read any more of this!"
10. An obvious recommendation, but don't say anything you wouldn't want said to you. If you're one of those folks who claim they can take it on the chin and would rather people "just be honest and tell me if it stinks," your rules are different.

Please, do not write anything you wouldn't want said about your manuscript, your beloved child, your spiritual beliefs, or your butt and thighs.

11. It might be difficult to separate your personal tastes from the way you judge. It's impossible to do it totally, but be aware of your own biases when downscoring. A skilled judge or critiquer has the ability to see beyond the content of the story to its structure, its mechanics, its writing clarity, and its likelihood of appealing to the public.

Example: You're sick of cop heroes. You don't like sex scenes in the first chapter. You don't like goofy humor. You don't like angst. You don't like books set in small



towns/big cities/pretend countries. You don't like medieval historicals. You don't like alpha heroes. You don't like secret baby stories. You don't like the name Homer. And so on and so forth.

Your best bet if you have strong personal dislikes related to content is to send the manuscript back to the coordinator and tell them you don't think you can be fair.

If you find yourself doing this with more than one or two entries, you might want to rethink judging until you can overcome your biases enough to treat the situation more professionally.

12. Likewise, avoid rewriting too many sentences or poking a peer's writing style into your shape. This is another area where it's difficult to differentiate between personal preference and areas that truly need improvement. Double check grammar recommendations you dole out.

Example: Lots of people like head-hopping. Lots of people are POV purists. Telling someone there is only one right way to do this won't help anybody.

Example: Right now, adjectives, adverbs, gerunds and other fanciful ways of expressing oneself are not highly regarded in literature. But do not give into the temptation to tell a hopeful writer she/he "can't" use adverbs or she/he "can't" start every third sentence with a gerund phrase. Suggest moderation and extol the virtues of sentence structure variety or avoiding repetition when it's not for artistic effect.

13. Please keep in mind that some entrants may use UK English rules. Some common differences between UK English and American English are as follows:

- Period = full stop;
- Format of dates/time is different. When written out, the day comes first, then month, then year. Example: If today is October 24, 2014, someone who uses UK English would write out 24 October, 2014, or use 24.10.14. Time uses a period instead of a colon. 8:30 in the US would be 8.30 in the UK.
- Mr and Mrs and Dr (no period/full stop after all abbreviations)
- Single quotes instead of double quotes for dialogue.
- Punctuation is outside of dialogue quotes.
- Burnt, learnt;
- Towards, backwards, frontwards;
- colour, neighbour, rumour;
- theatre, centre;
- licence, defence, offence;
- connexion, complexion
- realise, organise, analyse;



- dialogue and catalogue;
- encyclopaedia;
- travelling, cancelled, jewelry;
- likeable, liveable, sizeable, unshakeable;
- football player in US is footballer in UK
- counterclockwise in US is anticlockwise in UK
- trousers in UK = pants in the US
- pants in UK = underpants in the US
- jumper in UK = sweater in US

For more information:

- <http://www.thepunctuationguide.com/british-versus-american-style.html>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_and_British_English_spelling_differences
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_American_and_British_English
- <http://www.musicalenglishlessons.org/spelling-diffs.htm#punctuation>

All in all, since we're the first round and not the celebrity judges, it's best to think of ourselves as readers or brainstorming buddies. We're equals, not the final opinion, not somebody smarter or better, and we don't know everything.

What judging and critiquing boils down to is exercising your own skills as a reader and writer while not calling attention to yourself. Even when telling people things they don't want to hear, you can do it smoothly because the English language is your paintbrush and you are a word artist, a story crafter. Right? Right.

Read carefully, with an open mind for the market, and offer suggestions that will hopefully propel the author towards publication and earn you a spot on her/his acknowledgments page.