

# The Society of Authors

84 Drayton Gardens, London SW10 9SB

## Guide to Author Appearances

### 1 Get yourself known

Have a website which includes a page about events you have done and will consider. Ensure your publisher knows what you will and will not do. Get yourself listed on appropriate databases. (See the list at point 11.)

### 2 When you are invited

Ensure that relevant details are clear and satisfactory, and have been confirmed in writing with the event organiser.

Whatever the nature of your engagement, many of the points below may be relevant:

Date, time and precise location of the event.

The purpose of the event, and the title of your session(s).

The profile of the audience (e.g. aspiring writers, reading group, general public), and how many are expected. Is the event being held at the same time as others (which can affect numbers)?

The nature of the venue (e.g. lecture theatre, all in a circle, at the table after dinner) and any relevant features (e.g. if the lighting is poor – particularly if you are giving a workshop, or a tent which is noisy if it rains).

The nature of the session (reading, talk, panel discussion). Will you be on your own, and/or chaired, and/or with fellow panelists? If so, who are they? Can/should you contact any of them in advance and, if so, how?

The number and length of your session(s), and how much of any session should be a presentation and how much left for questions and answers.

Is the event being sponsored and, if so, by whom?

The availability of technical equipment (projector, PowerPoint, sound system, internet connection). Your specific requirements. Do you need to hand in e.g. PowerPoint presentations in advance? Can you check the site before the talk? Can the organiser provide someone to check that the equipment functions, and be on site in case it fails?

Do you need ISA clearance (see point 5(b))

Name and contact details of the organiser.

Your name, contact details and website. Details of your latest/forthcoming books.

If relevant, name and contact details for your publisher/publicist/agent.

Who is meeting you, when and where? Mobile phone numbers (if possible) for you and them.

A map of how to reach the event, and details of suitable public transport.

Will you need accommodation?

Who is responsible for booking travel tickets and accommodation?

Will a parking space be reserved for you?

What is the position if you would like to bring/travel with a partner – or a dog?

Do you have any disabilities of which the organisers should be aware?

The arrangements for refreshments, and any special dietary requirements. Also, if relevant, are you obliged – or would you like – to eat/stay for drinks with the audience.

Are you expected to bring support materials e.g. a copy of your book, or handouts? May you do so if you wish? Can they photocopy materials if needed?

If the event can offer you the chance to sell your own books, who will sort out the arrangements for supplying books? And who will be supplying the books: your publisher (and can you rely on them, or would fliers ideally offering a discount, to be forwarded to the publisher, be a safer bet)? A local bookseller (who may be able to offer a discount, or a modest commission to the event organiser on sales)? Will someone (not you) be on hand to sell the books?

What fee will you be paid (see points 4, 6 and 7)?

What expenses may you charge for? Do you need to supply receipts? Heated arguments can arise over the most trivial of expenses if they have not been cleared in advance.

With expenses like hotel bills, will the organisers pay them in advance? If not, what is the arrangement?

When will you be paid? It should be within 30 days of the event.

If the event is cancelled, how much notice will you be given and what will you be paid? (In addition, any bona fide expenses already incurred should also be refunded.)

Do you need to supply an invoice? Assuming yes, do you need a reference number or other identifier? To whom, at what address, should you send the invoice? A sample invoice is given at point 4.

### **3 On the day**

Clarify plans as far as possible but be ready to adapt to changing circumstances. If you feel that the situation is getting out of hand, speak to the organiser.

Give yourself plenty of time to get to the venue and have something to eat – there's nothing worse than arriving feeling stressed and tired.

Be sure you have the mobile number of the person meeting you.

If possible, before the audience arrives check out the room (the arrangement of seating, the height of the lectern, the microphone, the PowerPoint controls) and that all necessary equipment is in place.

Introduce yourself to fellow participants.

Make sure arrangements are in order for book displays and sales.

Be sure you can see a clock or remember to bring your watch.

Keep receipts.

## 4 Payment

a) The rates recommended by the Society are £350 and £250 respectively for full and half-day engagements (to cover a maximum of three sessions), plus expenses. We suggest a fee of £150 for a single session (not exceeding one hour, and plus expenses) when the author or illustrator is visiting a local venue or carrying out a number of separate visits e.g. to schools in a single area. For longer engagements, such as a residency for a week or a month, the Arts Council suggests that authors base their fee on an annual salary of £22,000.

b) If no fee is mentioned, say that in principle you would be pleased to accept – could the organiser let you know what fee is being offered? Even where fees are presented as fixed, they may be negotiable. Consider trying to get the organiser to confirm that the fee you are being offered matches those offered to other writers receiving similar invitations.

c) **Clarify your tax status at the outset.** Most authors are self-employed (even where they invoice as a limited company) and a one-off engagement does not create a contract of employment. A few local authorities and universities are inclined to tax payments to individuals – even a fee for a lecture or reading. If you are self-employed, we strongly advise that you make clear to the organiser, from the outset, that **neither tax nor NI should be deducted from your fee or expenses.** Furthermore, if you are VAT-registered, remind them that you are legally obliged to **charge VAT on top of both the fee and expenses.** If you meet resistance, you may find it useful to quote the HMRC Employment Status Manual (section 4502) which says that ‘a visiting lecturer who gives a one-off talk or short series of talks on a subject about which he or she has specialist knowledge... is likely to be self-employed.’

d) Some local authorities pay via payroll if your invoice distinguishes between fees and expenses. It may therefore be advisable to send an invoice with a ‘total package’ price, not mentioning the word ‘expenses’.

e) If you do a great deal of work for a single authority it may well be possible to register as a supplier with that authority which makes payment much easier.

f) The current Inland Revenue mileage rates, allowable as deductible expenses for tax purposes when using your car for business purposes, are 40p per mile for the first 10,000 miles, 25p per mile after that. (Some organisations offer less.)

### SAMPLE INVOICE

From: [author’s name and address]

To: [organiser’s name and address]

The date of the invoice

The date and title of the event

The department and reference number or other identifier of the institution or event organiser

Your invoice number

*Useful in any case. Essential if you are VAT-registered. Pick a numbering which suits you, e.g. 109 meaning 1st such engagement in 2009*

The fee

Details of agreed expenses

*Some universities pay via payroll if your invoice distinguishes between fees and expenses. It may therefore be advisable to send an invoice with a ‘total package’ price, not mentioning the word ‘expenses’. If you are charging expenses separately, you may also need to supply receipts*

Your ten-digit UTR (Unique Taxpayer’s Reference) number

Your National Insurance number

*If you are VAT registered:* Your VAT number

*If you will be paid by BACS:* Name of bank, branch address, sort code, name of account, account number

*If appropriate add:*

This service was provided by a self-employed tax payer. It was therefore a booking condition that payment [plus VAT if you are VAT-registered] be made in full, as per invoice, and that income tax etc. should not be deducted at source.

*You may also want to add:*

Payment is due within 30 days of invoice date. Statutory interest will be charged on overdue payments (*Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998* as amended and supplemented by the *Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2002*). The statutory administrative fee will be charged on overdue payments (*Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2002: Section 5A*).

## 5 Legal Rights and Requirements

a) The organisers should not make a recording or podcast of your talk, or publish or otherwise disseminate it, without your explicit consent. Many authors are not willing to agree to such wider use of their contribution; for instance it may inhibit how you talk, or the presentation could be one you may want to repeat. It can become very awkward arguing the point on the day itself, especially if you are part of a panel or are interviewing someone/being interviewed, and we strongly advise that you clarify your position, in writing, from the outset.

b) If there could be children (under 18) or vulnerable adults present, you may need to have ISA clearance. Draft government guidelines make this a legal requirement in many circumstances, from autumn 2010. We are making representations about the disproportionately far-reaching implications of the current proposals. Further details from the Society on request. The ISA advice line is 0300 123 1111.

c) Many schools and local authorities now insist that those visiting schools and libraries have some form of public liability insurance as do many other bodies (including the National Trust). It is highly recommended that you take out such insurance. Specialist cover is available from Blake Insurance Services, Bridgwater – email maxwell.piper@higos.co.uk, tel 01278 453345. Annual premiums start at £62.50. Cover up to £2m should be adequate – if a local authority insists on greater cover, the answer may be to charge the extra cost to the organisation.

## 6 Publicising a book

On first publication, it is unlikely that you will be paid a fee (publishers and broadcasters will argue that you benefit via increased royalties) but travel expenses should be paid. However, there is a trend for bookshops to charge the public for attending readings and signings, and in that case it is reasonable for you to expect payment.

In some cases promotional tours are hugely beneficial to sales but the bottom line should always be, ‘is this a good use of my time?’ When you do agree to travel, try to ensure the trip is as pleasant as possible. Don’t allow your publisher to pack six weeks’ work into three, and take note of the route and schedule. The route should be logical (not criss-crossing back and forth), and there should be plenty of scheduled time for meals and breaks. If relevant, discuss scheduling so that you have time to recover from jetlag. Insist on club class seats on long-haul flights, and a good standard of hotel. If the overseas publisher complains that it can’t afford to cover these costs, stand firm. The chances are that your UK publisher will agree to subsidise the expenses.

If you feel that too much is being asked of you, commit to, say, two weeks of promotional work for each new title with provision for a fee of £500 per day after that. If nothing else, it should make the publisher focus more clearly on how best to use you.

If your work is only part of a larger book, course or series, or if you were only paid a one-off fee (i.e. your promotion will benefit others more than you), you should certainly be recompensed for taking on the extra work.

Beware that if your publishers organise promotional events (other than on the launch of your book), they may not make great efforts to secure you a fee. This is increasingly a problem for writers in schools. In the publishers’ view, all publicity is promotion for your book(s) – or theirs – and that should be sufficient. Our view is that activities which eat into your writing and therefore money-earning time should be at your discretion and should be paid for on a proper freelance basis. Furthermore, people often place more value on something they’ve paid for.

## 7 Literary festivals

The Society has a **Checklist for Organisers of Literary Festivals commissioning Writers**. It is available in the members section of the website, or from the Society on request.

Remember that many festivals welcome direct approaches from authors.

Perhaps understandably, new writers may accept bookings for festivals where no payment is offered because the publicity will be valuable and it is hoped that book sales will increase. It is the Society's view, though, that if big name writers negotiate the best fees possible (which they may, of course, donate to charity if they wish), a precedent for paying writers 'properly' will become established and all writers will benefit. This issue is particularly important to poets and other authors who earn their living as much through performance as from publication.

Fees for performing at literary festivals can range from zero to more than the average author earns over a whole year, depending on the festival and the status of the author. Some festivals which protest that they don't pay fees can be persuaded to come up with something – some just won't.

When authors choose to support a small, local festival, or one which is just starting up, it may be acceptable for no fee to be paid (although travel and accommodation expenses, where relevant, should always be paid). However, festivals are becoming increasingly big business with commercial sponsors and the public paying for tickets. Well-established festivals should offer reasonable fees as a matter of course – otherwise, everyone is being paid except the author.

Publishers have been known to arrange for authors to attend festivals without considering whether or not a fee should be paid. If this happens, contact the festival organiser yourself to discuss your fee, or ask your publisher to do so.

If no fee is forthcoming, consider requesting very generous expenses so that you can either enjoy a luxurious trip or spend considerably less than is budgeted for on travel and accommodation and treat the balance as payment.

## 8 Schools

The Society has a **Guide to Writers in Schools**. It is available in the members section of the website, or from the Society on request.

## 9 Universities

The Society has a **Checklist for Authors invited to speak at Universities and Colleges**. It is available in the members section of the website, or from the Society on request.

## 10 Libraries

The feedback we receive is to be wary: many libraries are poor at generating publicity and getting audiences, especially young ones, and have very limited budgets.

The following *Partnership Guidelines* are from The Reading Agency, P O Box 96, St Albans AL1 3WP, [www.readingagency.org.uk](http://www.readingagency.org.uk).

### *Event*

1. Library/venue/address
2. Date/time of event
3. Programme: one-off event or part of wider promotion (e.g. Readers' Day)
4. Title of event
5. Name(s) of author(s)
6. Title(s) of book(s) to be promoted
7. Contact details and websites of author, publisher, and library

### *Publisher agrees to provide*

1. Design and print advance publicity material (e.g. posters/leaflets/show-cards, author information, copy of book to local reviews/features editor)

*[Festivals tend to have generic publicity, schools have a captive audience. For libraries, the cost of publicity can be a major*

*problem. Where possible professionally designed material, e.g. posters, should be supplied by the publishers.]*

2. Liaison with library and author for local/regional news stories/features, radio/TV links
3. Author's travel expenses

#### *Author agrees to provide*

1. Talk/presentation/reading in format, and at length, agreed in advance with library (and publisher); to liaise with library over local/regional features of book
2. Sorting out with the library the author's preferred arrangements. These will depend on the event (evening, half-day, full-day etc), and the status of the author. They will also depend on travel time (e.g. under 2 hours or over). Given these variables, here are three possible options. The figures suggested are for a midlist author at a 1-2-hour event involving over 2 hours' return travel:

*Option A:* speaking fee payable: e.g. half day £100-£150, full day £250, event at a nearby library: £75.

*Option B:* no fee, minimum audience. This number (e.g. 25) agreed, with event to be cancelled (4-5 days in advance) if this minimum not reached.

*Option C:* no fee, no minimum. New writers may be pleased to gain experience and meet readers, with an informal event at their local library.

[*The Society advises that where events are charged for, the author should be paid a fee.*]

#### *Library agrees to provide*

1. Normally, a library venue and facilities (free of charge)
2. Ticketing, pricing (e.g. £2-£6 including wine) and pre-booking arrangements.
3. Payment/cancellation arrangements
4. Sufficient books available for loan to reading groups and other library users (via library supplier), 2-3 months before the event
5. Liaison with local bookshop/publisher to ensure copies for sale are available 2-3 months beforehand
6. Liaison with publishers over regional libraries' mailing list, local reading groups mailing list, local press e.g. book reviews
7. Liaison with publisher to ensure copies for sale are available on the day (copies to arrive 2-3 days in advance)
8. Discuss book-signing with the author (and if relevant with the local bookshop)
9. Liaison with publishers over news stories, photographer immediately before and after the event.

## **11 Databases for authors**

*Entry on some of these databases is free – others charge (we understand that such fees can be negotiable, e.g. in return for a shorter initial period of listing).*

The Society of Authors ([www.societyofauthors.net/writersearch](http://www.societyofauthors.net/writersearch))

[www.artscape.org.uk](http://www.artscape.org.uk) (also includes the NAWA database)

[www.contactanauthor.co.uk](http://www.contactanauthor.co.uk)

[www.batchconnect.com](http://www.batchconnect.com) (linking authors, bookshops and publishers, run by the Booksellers Association)

[www.readingagency.org.uk](http://www.readingagency.org.uk) - writers in libraries

[www.ncll.org.uk](http://www.ncll.org.uk) - The National Centre for Language and Literacy

[www.applesandsnakes.org](http://www.applesandsnakes.org) - poets

[www.childrensdiscovery.org.uk](http://www.childrensdiscovery.org.uk) - writers in schools

[www.expertsources.co.uk](http://www.expertsources.co.uk)

[www.freelancersintheuk.co.uk](http://www.freelancersintheuk.co.uk)

Public libraries and School Library Services, and the Arts Councils and their regional offices also maintain lists of visiting authors

*Substantial sources of information, links and potential commissions:*

[www.literaturetraining.com](http://www.literaturetraining.com)

[www.ecademy.com](http://www.ecademy.com)