
Poetry Submission Suggestions

A Practical Guide for Adult & Emerging Poets

How to prepare, place, and track your poems — plus a curated list of welcoming journals, contests, and tools for 2026.

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Part One — How to Submit Your Poetry

Submitting poetry is a craft of its own. The poems matter most, but editors also notice whether a writer follows guidelines, writes a clean cover letter, and behaves professionally. This section walks you through the whole process, from preparing a batch of poems to responding to an acceptance. None of it is difficult — it simply rewards patience and a little organization.

1. Before You Send: Getting Ready

Give yourself a real starting point before you approach any journal.

- Revise, then rest. Let finished poems sit for a week or two, then read them aloud. The ear catches what the eye forgives.
- Assemble a working batch. Most journals ask for three to five poems. Choose pieces that show range but share a recognizable voice.
- Lead with your strongest poem. Editors often decide within the first page. Put your best work first, not saved for last.
- Keep a master file. Store each poem as its own clean document, plus a spreadsheet listing titles, where each has been sent, and its status.

2. Choosing Where to Submit

Fit matters more than prestige. A poem accepted by a modest journal that genuinely loves it reaches readers; the same poem may vanish in a top-tier slush pile. Before submitting anywhere:

- Read an issue first. Most journals post samples online. If your work would sit comfortably beside what they publish, it is a good match.
- Check the reading period. Many journals open only during set windows. Submitting when they are closed wastes your time and theirs.
- Note the fee. Plenty of excellent journals are free to submit to. Reserve paid submissions and contest fees for venues you truly want.
- Respect eligibility. Some contests are only for poets without a published book — a real advantage for newer writers.

3. Formatting Your Poems

Unless a journal says otherwise, follow these conventions. They signal that you know how the process works.

- One document, all poems. Combine your batch into a single file (usually .docx or .pdf), one poem per page, with a page break between poems.

- Standard type. A readable 12-point serif such as Times New Roman or Georgia, single-spaced within stanzas, left-aligned.
- Title and name. Put the poem's title at the top of each page. Include your name and contact information on the first page unless the journal reads blind — then remove all identifying details.
- Preserve your lineation. If a poem has unusual spacing or long lines, send a PDF so the formatting cannot shift.

4. Writing the Cover Letter

A cover letter is short, warm, and professional — three or four sentences. It does not explain or defend the poems. A reliable template:

Dear Editors,

Please consider the enclosed poems, “[Title One],” “[Title Two],” and “[Title Three],” for publication in [Journal Name].

[One sentence of bio: recent publications, or simply that this would be among your first. If you have none, say so plainly — editors publish new writers every issue.]

Thank you for your time and for the work you do. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Warmly,
[Your Name]*

Do not: apologize, describe your themes, list every credit you have, or address editors by the wrong journal name. Always double-check you have the right journal in the greeting.

5. Simultaneous Submissions & Etiquette

- Submit simultaneously. Because response times run one to six months, send the same batch to several journals at once — unless a journal forbids it (rare, but stated in guidelines).
- Withdraw promptly. The moment a poem is accepted, withdraw it everywhere else. On Submittable, add a note or use the withdraw button; by email, send a brief, gracious note.
- Never send the same poem twice to a journal in one reading period, and do not query about status until well past their stated response time.
- One poem, one home. Most journals want unpublished work, and ‘published’ includes personal blogs and social media for many of them. Check each journal's definition.

6. Using Submittable

Most journals in this guide use Submittable, a free platform for writers. You create one account and use it everywhere.

- Free to you. Submittable never charges writers; any fee shown belongs to the journal, not the platform.
- One dashboard. Every submission's status — Received, In Progress, Accepted, Declined — lives in one place.
- Follow each form. Some journals want one combined file; others want the cover letter pasted into a text box. Read the on-screen prompts.
- Withdraw from the dashboard. If a poem is accepted elsewhere, open the submission and use the withdraw option (or message the editors).

7. Tracking Your Submissions

A simple tracking system prevents the two classic mistakes: forgetting where a poem is, and accidentally leaving an accepted poem live elsewhere. A spreadsheet with these columns is enough:

Poem Title	Journal	Date Sent	Fee	Status	Response Date
The Guard	ONE ART	2026-07-15	Free	Pending	—
Turbulence	Rust & Moth	2026-09-02	Free	Declined	2026-10-10

Free tools such as Chill Subs and the Submission Grinder can do this for you automatically — see Section 11.

8. Handling Responses

- Expect rejection — it is normal. Even widely published poets are declined far more often than accepted. A ‘no’ is about fit and space, not worth.
- Value a personal note. If an editor writes ‘please send again,’ take it seriously and do so. That is genuine encouragement.
- Accept graciously and read the contract. Note what rights the journal takes (usually first serial rights, which return to you after publication) and whether you may reprint the poem later.
- Keep going. Submit steadily rather than in bursts. A rhythm of a few submissions a month, kept up over a year, is what builds a publication record.

Part Two — Where to Submit

Every venue below was verified on its own website in July 2026. Reading periods and fees change often, so always confirm current guidelines on the journal's site before submitting. Free-to-submit venues are marked [Free]. Reading periods are noted as of July 2026.

9. Beginner-Friendly Literary Journals

These journals publish poetry and either welcome emerging writers explicitly or keep barriers low. Most are free to submit to.

Journal	What They Publish	Fee	Reading Period (as of July 2026)	Per Sub
Rattle	Accessible, populist poetry; themed calls and Poets Respond	[Free]	Open year-round (general subs)	Up to 4
The Sun	Unguarded, narrative-accessible poems on life and mortality	\$2.50	Rolling; ~3-month reply	Up to 5
Poetry	Flagship U.S. magazine; wide range; unpublished work only	[Free]	Closed Jun 15–Sep 15; else open	1 per cat.
Frontier Poetry — New Voices	Platform built to launch new poets	[Free]	Always open	Up to 5
Palette Poetry	Diverse voices; welcomes emerging authors	[Free]	Open year-round	Up to 5
Rust & Moth	Poetry-only; any style; low-barrier market	[Free]	20-day windows; next Sep 1–20	Up to 3
Split Lip	Pop-surreal, hyperreal; fresh, unpublished work	[Free]*	Free in Jan/Mar/May/Sep/Nov	Exactly 1
Whale Road Review	Poetry and short prose; genre-blending welcome	[Free]	Jun 1–15 and Dec 1–15	3–5
ONE ART	Concise free verse; wants to be your first publisher	[Free]	Open 24/7/365	1–5
The Rumpus	Publishes emerging and established writers	[Free]	Periodic pauses — check live status	4–8
Cider Press Review	Contemporary poetry; craft and substance	[Free]	Feb 15–May 31; reopens 2027	Up to 5
Passengers Journal	Strange, technically sound, risk-taking poems	[Free]	Continuous/rolling	Up to 5
The Shore	Liminality; new and established poets alike	[Free]	Quarterly; Fall window closes Sep 1	3–5
Thimble	Poetry and short prose; work that 'creates shelter'	[Free]	Feb, Mar, May, Jun, Aug, Sep, Nov, Dec	2–3
Anti-Heroine Chic	Raw, confessional, warm and inclusive	\$3	Currently open	Up to 3

Journal	What They Publish	Fee	Reading Period (as of July 2026)	Per Sub
trampset	Voice-driven literary work; free tier for writers	[Free]	Generally open	Up to 3

**Split Lip is free during odd-numbered months and offers a fee waiver on request. Sources verified July 2026: Rattle, The Sun, Poetry Foundation, Frontier Poetry, Palette Poetry, Rust & Moth, Split Lip, Whale Road Review, ONE ART, The Rumpus, Cider Press Review, Passengers Journal, The Shore, Thimble, Anti-Heroine Chic, and trampset. Always confirm current guidelines before submitting.*

10. Contests for Emerging Poets

Contests can bring larger prizes and visibility. Several below are reserved for poets without a published book — a genuine advantage for newer writers. Deadlines rotate annually; the dates shown reflect the 2026 cycle unless noted.

Contest	Type	Fee	Prize	Deadline / Cycle
Frontier New Voices	Single poem, rolling	[Free]	\$50/poem on acceptance	Always open
Palette [FREE] Challenge	Single poem, themed	[Free]	~\$500 + publication	Short seasonal windows
Palette Rising Poet Prize	Single poem/group	\$20	\$3,000 + runners-up	Spring (watch 2027)
Frontier OPEN	Single poem	\$20	\$5,000 + finalists	Reopens each spring
Frontier Debut Chapbook	Chapbook 15–30 pp	\$25	\$2,000 + publication	Annual (watch 2027)
Rattle Poetry Prize	Single poem	\$30†	\$15,000 + finalists	July 15, 2026
Rattle Chapbook Prize	Chapbook 15–30 pp	\$30†	\$5,000 × 3 winners	January 15 (annual)
Boulevard Emerging Poets	Group of 3 poems	\$18†	\$1,000 + publication	June 1 (reopens Feb 1)
Ploughshares Emerging	3–5 pp poetry	\$30‡	\$2,000 + agent consult	Feb 1–Mar 31

† Fee includes a one-year magazine subscription. ‡ Free for current Ploughshares subscribers. Frontier and Palette offer free-entry windows for poets from historically marginalized groups (capped per cycle). Several 2026 deadlines have passed — they are shown to illustrate the annual pattern; check each site for the next opening.

Eligibility highlights: Frontier New Voices, Palette Rising Poet, Debut Chapbook, Boulevard, and Ploughshares all restrict entry to poets without a published book (or chapbook), making them especially well-suited to emerging writers.

11. Submission-Tracking & Discovery Tools

Submittable — Free for writers

The standard submission platform. One free account tracks status and withdrawals across most journals in this guide.

Chill Subs — Free core features

A friendly database of 3,600+ magazines and 700+ contests with a tracker, deadline calendar, and acceptance-rate stats. Built to feel welcoming to newcomers.

Submission Grinder — Completely free

A community database of 17,000+ markets with a free tracker. Strong for poetry and fiction; a solid no-cost alternative to Duotrope.

Poets & Writers — Free (nonprofit)

A staff-curated database of 800+ literary magazines plus a contests/grants database, filterable by open reading periods and genre.

Duotrope — \$5/mo or \$50/yr

A paid database of 5,000+ markets with detailed response-time and acceptance statistics. Optional — useful, but not required to submit anywhere.

For a budget: Submittable + Chill Subs (or the Submission Grinder) + Poets & Writers is a complete, no-cost toolkit.

12. A Simple Starting Plan

If this feels like a lot, start here. This four-step rhythm will place you on a professional footing within a single afternoon.

- 1 Pick three free journals from Section 9 whose work you admire and whose reading period is open now.
- 2 Prepare one clean batch of three to five poems, best poem first, in a single document.
- 3 Write one short cover letter using the template in Section 4, and tailor the journal name for each.
- 4 Log each submission in a spreadsheet or a free tracker, then set a reminder to submit again next month.

Poems live when they find readers. Send them out, keep good records, and let each 'no' move you toward the right 'yes.'

FROM THE PUBLISHER

A Personal Note to You

First, let me say how glad I am that you are here, and how much your writing has come to mean to me. Whatever happens with any single submission, please know that I believe in you and in the work you are doing.

I want to tell you something before you begin, because I wish someone had told me plainly when I was starting out: this was hard for me too. For years I sent my work into the quiet and waited, and what came back, again and again, was *no*. The rejections arrived in bundles — some gentle, most simply silent — and every one of them asked whether I was willing to keep going. I decided that I was. Not because I felt sure of the work, but because I had come to believe that the writers who make it are rarely the most gifted in the room; they are the ones who keep sending, who let each *no* be a comma and never a period.

What carried me through was not confidence — it was persistence, and the quiet discipline of returning to the desk: revise, submit, write down the date, begin the next poem, and send again. And I promise you this: the acceptances, when they finally came, did not cancel the rejections. They grew out of them. Every *no* was teaching me something, even when it didn't feel that way.

I care very much that you get published — not someday, but truly, and not because publication is the only measure of a writer, but because your work deserves to be read, and because I know how much it means to hold that first acceptance in your hands. So I'll ask of you the same thing I once had to ask of myself, and I'll ask it gently: choose a poem you believe in, find two or three journals from the lists in this guide, and submit it today. Not tomorrow. Not when it feels perfect — it never will. Today. The waiting is part of the work, and you are more ready than you think.

And let me say this plainly, because I mean it: I think of you as my peers — fellow writers, not students beneath me. I respect every one of you. It has been one of the great joys of my life to witness your talent up close and to sit with you in conversation about writing and literature, and I have come away from those hours happier and richer for them. I am confident — genuinely, not politely — that you will be published if you persist.

One last thing. Other writers were generous with me when I was starting out, and that generosity is a debt I can only repay forward — so on the pages that follow, I've shared a little of my own work with you: what I believe about writing, and two introductions from books I'm still making. They are not offered as the best of anything, only as honest examples, one writer to another.

I'm rooting for you — always. Be gentle with yourself, keep going, and know that I am in your corner every step of the way.

— *James Mulhern, Silver Current Press*

A GIFT, ONE WRITER TO ANOTHER

An Artistic Creed

Over the years, so many writers generously shared their work with me — their drafts, their beliefs, their hard-won lessons — and I would not be where I am without that generosity. So let me share some of mine with you in return. I do not offer these because I think they are the best; I don't. I offer them simply as honest examples you can look at, learn from, and then set aside to write something that sounds like no one but you.

I write as a Transcendentalist — in sensibility and in spirit. I came to this not as a doctrine to be argued but as a way of seeing I could not put down. Emerson taught me to trust the inner light and to call the great current of things the Oversoul. Thoreau taught me to look long and closely at the near and the small until they open. Whitman taught me that a single life, honestly told, contains multitudes and belongs to everyone. I am in their debt, and I do not pretend otherwise.

I believe the sacred is not far off but here — in a kitchen, a sickroom, a stretch of shoreline, the face of someone loved and lost. I believe the soul is not sealed within us but joined, through the Oversoul, to every other soul that has been or will be. And I believe that nothing true is ever finished. The Oversoul repeats and refines what it has made, never completing it, and I take my instruction from that unhurried, unfinished work.

This is why I return, deliberately, to the same scenes, the same symbols, the same kinds of people. The repetitions in my work are purposeful — they are my way of pointing to the truth I hold. I am not repeating myself; I am practicing recurrence, gathering up the same enduring truths and setting them down again in new hands, new voices, new incarnations. What is laid down is taken up. Nothing we love is lost; like water, like breath, like light, it is only changed, only carried forward, only lived anew.

So I write from mercy rather than judgment, and I extend that mercy to every character I make. I treat each story as a small act of faith — a way of summoning what is unseen and holding it in the light a little longer. If my work has one purpose, it is this: to show that the ordinary is holy, that memory is a form of love, and that we are, all of us, one people — gathered, remade, and never truly parted.

— James F. Mulhern

FROM MY OWN DESK — WORKS IN PROGRESS

Two Sample Introductions

In the same generous spirit, here are two more of mine. Writing an introduction for your own work is harder than it looks. Please don't take these as the best examples; they are simply mine, offered humbly — and honestly, as works in progress. Both books are still being made as I write this, and I am still revising these very pages. I cross out, begin again, and doubt them, exactly as you will with yours. That is the work, not a sign of failing.

Introduction — *All We Ever Needed* (a story collection)

The stories in *All We Ever Needed* move through kitchens, classrooms, beaches, bookstores, apartments, and fading neighborhoods where love and damage rarely arrive one at a time. Again and again, people try to live inside family histories that have already marked them. Some are buoyed by memory, some haunted by it, and some use wit, cruelty, appetite, or make-believe to keep from being swallowed by what they know.

A few images recur by design. Water is the constant: a seawater cure sought on the Feast of the Assumption, a pond that has kept its drowned, a bath drawn for an aging mother, a fountain, a river, and at last a rain that leaves a man drenched to the bone. I have let it move through the book as more than weather. Water is the oldest sign of the spiritual life — the water of baptism, of ruin and renewal — and it runs beneath these ordinary lives as the possibility, never quite promised, of being made clean.

I take language to be a sacred inheritance and the act of naming to be a kind of devotion. These stories are my prayers, and my prayers are my stories; the recurrences in these pages are laid there in that spirit. What remains, after the jokes sour and the illusions fall away, is the question the collection keeps returning to: what, in the end, sustains us? The answers here are partial, unruly, and deeply human.

— James Mulhern (DRAFT · IN PROGRESS)

Foreword — *Mia Bambina and Other Stories*

There is a durable American lineage of fiction that begins not with spectacle but with a room, a family car, a parish, a school hallway, a kitchen table at which someone says the wrong thing and the air changes. One hears, at moments in these stories, the grave attentiveness of Andre Dubus,

the domestic acuity of Alice McDermott, the religious pressure of Mary Gordon, the rueful comic steadiness of Richard Russo.

The five stories gathered in *Mia Bambina and Other Stories* move through Boston dormitories and beaches, old kitchens and classrooms, South Florida cafés and storefronts heavy with incense. Their geography is specific, but the territory is interior: the strange compromise by which people continue to live near shame, grief, lust, resentment, love. The sacred and the profane are not opposites here. They are neighbors. In certain families, they are sisters.

These are stories of mortality, memory, and moral compromise told without sentimentality. They ask how much harm can be done in the name of love, how much mercy can survive in a damaged person, and whether any ritual can prepare us for the final silence. The answer, mercifully, is not simplified. The stories look hard. They do not look away.

— *from the front matter of Mia Bambina and Other Stories* (DRAFT · IN PROGRESS)