

What is The Literary Consultancy (TLC)?

Established in 1996 as the first service of its kind, The Literary Consultancy (TLC) offers a range of services for writers including [manuscript assessment](#), [mentoring](#), and [events](#) at its base in the Free Word Centre in London. TLC services are available to all writers, at all stages of development, writing in English.

What is the Free Reads scheme?

TLC has helped hundreds of writers on [to publication](#), but its main aim is to support writers developing their work and honing their writing craft through structured constructive feedback. Since 2001, TLC has been in receipt of funding from Arts Council England to extend its offer to those unable to pay the fees for its commercial services: The TLC Free Reads Scheme offers **low-income writers** the opportunity to get free professional feedback on their writing.

I'm not based in London – can I still apply?

Yes you can! The Free Reads Scheme is open to all writers resident in England through a range of partners. You can find a map of the partners operating in each region, as well as more information about the scheme [here](#). As TLC's regional partner for London, Spread the Word is only processing entries from London-based writers for the scheme.

How do I know if I'm eligible to enter the scheme?

You're eligible for the scheme if you're on a low income. You may be:

- Earning £23,000 and below
- A full-time student
- A pensioner
- In receipt of Jobseekers' Allowance, Disability Benefits, Income Support or Working Tax Credits.

We're especially interested in applications from writers under-represented in publishing (disabled writers, BAME writers and members of the LGBTQ+ community)

I identify as being on a low-income but don't fit the eligibility criteria, can I still apply?

We're able to evaluate submissions on a case-by-case basis if you identify as being on a low-income but don't meet the criteria then [send us an e-mail](#) with a bit more detail and we'll let you know what to do next.

Ok, I'm going to apply - what do I need to send in?

Fab news! You'll need to send in the following:

- A completed application form

- A complete synopsis of the written work submitted. The synopsis must clearly show your story's outline and should not exceed 1,000 words.
- Evidence of how you meet the scheme
- Your writing (up to 1000 words or up to 20 pages if it is poetry or script writing)

What do you mean by 'evidence'?

You'll need to provide some documentation to confirm that you meet the criteria. This could be: benefits letter, payslips, confirmation of full-time student status, pensions slips or anything else that confirms your eligibility.

I'm not a fiction writer, can I still apply for a Free Read?

Yes you can! The scheme is open to writing across fiction, creative non-fiction, short stories, poetry scripts and screenplays.

My work isn't complete – can I still enter?

Yes you can. The Free Reads Scheme offers either a partial or full manuscript assessment so there is an option to have part of your work assessed. However, you must be able to produce a clear synopsis of how your story develops. If you do not yet know the ending, that is absolutely fine.

How do I submit?

You can either submit online via Submittable or send your entry to us via post. The postal address to send your submission to is: Aliya Gulamani (Free Reads Scheme), Spread the Word, The Albany, Douglas Way, LONDON, SE8 4AG. All postal entries will receive an e-mail receipt.

I've been offered a Free Reads, what do I do next?

Congratulations!

You either will have been selected for a full manuscript assessment or a partial manuscript assessment – please check this in your e-mail.

In the same e-mail you will also be given guidelines on what to do next and how to submit your work to us. You'll have five weeks to put your work together and send it across to us. We will then pass it onto TLC, who will match your manuscript to a suitable reader from its list of 80+ professional editors. They will provide a written critique of your work within 4-6 weeks of the application being processed.

I didn't get offered a Free Reads. Can I ask for feedback?

Unfortunately not. We receive a high number of entries for this scheme which means it isn't possible to provide feedback on each entry.

My question isn't listed here – what do I do?

[Drop us an e-mail](#) and we'll get back to you!