

FAQs: The Free Reads Scheme 2019

What is the Free Reads scheme?

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. 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 on The Literary Consultancy's website. 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 (contact details below) with a bit more detail and we'll let you know what to do next.

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.

I have a disability and would like to enter my story through a different format – an audio story / signed story / other formats. Can I do this?

Absolutely. If you email us (contact details below) describing the format you'd like to submit your story into, then we will set up the appropriate channels for doing this for you.

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

Fab! 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.

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?

All entries must be submitted via our Submittable site:

<https://spreadtheword.submittable.com/submit>

I've missed the deadline! Can I still enter?

This year we're opening the Free Reads scheme all year round with two deadline windows: 1 July and 1 November. Please note that on both days applications will need to be received by 11:59pm.

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 two weeks to submit your manuscript to us via post. 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?

Email Aliya and aliya@spreadtheword.org.uk and we'll get back to you!