

The Hot Key Books Young Writers Prize: FAQs

Can I go over the 4000 word limit on the initial submission?

Yes, we are allowing a 10% grace on the initial submission.

Can I submit again if I entered last year and if so, can I submit the same manuscript?

As long as you still meet the entry criteria you can definitely enter again. You can submit what you entered last year, but we would strongly encourage you to write something new to better your chances.

Should the submission be double or single-spaced?

Your 4000 word submission should be double-spaced, in a clear, easily readable 12pt font and should be entitled '[your submission title] - [your name] YWP'. The biography and synopsis can be single-spaced (entitled respectively '[your name] biography' and '[your submission title] synopsis') but still in a clear 12pt font.

Does my initial submission have to be the first 4000 words, or can it be from anywhere in my book?

It needs to be the first 4000 words of your book - which should be the best and most exciting!

How do I fill in the application form?

Ideally it should be printed, filled out, scanned in and then emailed over, as we need your signature. If you have no access to a scanner or digital camera, we will accept a postal form - though we cannot accept submissions through the post, so be sure to email your entry and state in the message that your form is forthcoming in the post.

What if I want to change the opening between the initial submission stage and the shortlist stage?

It doesn't have to be the same word for word, but it shouldn't be far off. Remember, those first 4000 words will be what has won the judges over and beaten all the competition so far!

What should I include in the short biography? Is there a word limit?

We suggest between 50-100 words, though there is no official limit. Your bio should be something that you would imagine as your author bio - a little bit about your background and what you're doing now. Most are normally in the third person, though if you are more comfortable writing in the first person, please do.

Can I enter a submission to each age group, or just one?

You can only enter once, so you do need to choose an age category to submit to (either 9-12 or 13-19).

Can my submission be the first part of a trilogy?

Yes - though your submission should be satisfying in its own right. Be sure to mention in your synopsis that this will be the first of a trilogy (though we only require an outline for book one).

I've emailed in my entry - should I expect a confirmation email?

Yes, everyone should receive a confirmation email within a day or so. If you don't get one within a few days, please let us know so we can check if we have your entry.

Do I have to be aged 18-25?

Yes - you must be aged 18-25 on the day you submit your initial 4000 words. If you turn 26 after that day, then you are fine to submit. If you are not aged 18-25 during the initial submission period, unfortunately your entry will not be accepted.

Can I submit my manuscript to agents and other publishers during the prize submission process?

You are free to submit your manuscript elsewhere at any time, even during the competition - but if you find representation or a publishing contract, please tell us right away so we can remove your submission from consideration. If you aren't selected to continue, you can of course submit your manuscript elsewhere.

I don't live in the UK - can I still enter?

Yes, the competition is open worldwide - your submission just has to be written in English.

Where should I send my submission?

Email your submission (which should be entitled '[your submission title] - [your name] YWP'), scanned application form, biography and synopsis to youngwritersprize@hotkeybooks.com. Please note we are NOT accepting any postal submissions.

What does "entries must be the unaided and original work of the entrant" mean?

This is a legal phrase, basically to make sure there is no plagiarism. If the work is your own creation then you are fine to enter - getting feedback from trusted friends and relatives is entirely allowed and encouraged!

Will there be any travel required in the later competition stages?

No. Obviously we'd love to meet the winners, but if they live outside the UK we can talk over Skype!