

How to Sell a Short Story

Sarina Dorie Bio

Sarina Dorie has sold over 170 short stories to markets like Analog, Daily Science Fiction, F & SF, Metro Moms, RWR, and Orson Scott Card's IGMS. Her stories and published novels have won humor contests and Romance Writer of America awards. She has about fifty books up on Amazon, including her bestselling hexy series, *Womby's School for Wayward Witches*.

www.sarinadorie.com

Benefits of Selling Short Stories

Money

FREE Marketing

Prestige

Gaining readers

Self-promotion

Directing traffic to other works

Winning contests

Learning to write more succinctly

Writing more content more quickly

Building up your writing resume

Another way to reach fans

Use story as a reader magnet

The rejection rate is not as severe

You are rejected and accepted more quickly than with a novel

If the story sucks, there is less guilt about abandoning it

Steps to Sell a Short Story to a Magazine

Some people might specifically write a novel to use it as a reader magnet for their published or yet-to-be-published novels. Some people have short stories they've written and want to submit to magazines, but don't know what to do with them. It is overwhelming getting started. I learned by asking other writers what to do, following their examples, and seeing where they were submitting. I was disorganized, didn't know how to keep track of my submissions and rejections, and leaned by trial and error.

I am going to break this down for you into simple steps to sell stories for publication so you don't have to make some of the mistakes I've made.

1. Write a short story. That's the easy part.
2. Edit the story.
3. Format the story. Good examples can be found here:
<http://www.shunn.net/format/story.html>
<http://www.sfwriter.com/mschklst.htm>
4. Write a cover letter. Include title, genre, word count, a one sentence summary, credentials and contact info. They often state in the guidelines if they want more or less.
5. Research available markets (anthologies, contests, magazines or ezines) using:
Word of mouth
Writer's Market Book
Duotrope (<https://duotrope.com/>)
Ralan's (<http://www.ralan.com/>)
Submission Grinder (<http://thegrinder.diabolicalplots.com/>)
Horror Tree (<http://horrortree.com/>)

6. Read and analyze what sells in these markets. For example, don't submit a Western to a market that only likes contemporary.
7. Follow guidelines for SIMs, MULTs, and other rules from a specific market. (This is publishing jargon for simultaneous submissions—submitting to more than one magazine at once and multiple submissions—submitting more than one story to the same magazine at once.)
8. Submit! Depending on your goal and reason for selling, start with those that pay the most, the most prestigious, or the quickest response.
9. Create or use a database to keep track of submissions, rejections and sales. I have found Microsoft Excel spreadsheet works well. Some people use online apps on StoryOrigin or Duotrope.
10. Use a sale to market yourself. Share this on social media. Use the bio the magazine lets you include to direct traffic to a newsletter sign up, your other novels, or social media accounts.
11. Know which rights you have sold and when those rights that revert back to you. Some magazines take North American rights for six months. Others pay very little and take rights in perpetuity. Sometimes publishers are upfront about the rights they are taking on their website, but for some, you won't know until they send you a contract.
12. After the rights of a sale revert back to you, resell the story to another market as a reprint.
13. Resell your work on Smashwords, Amazon, include the story in collection, or put it up on your website for free for more exposure. You can use these stories as reader magnets—but only if you own the rights again.
14. If you are targeting a select market, do steps 1-6 in reverse. Find a market and research it. Structure a story based on an anthology or magazine you wish to sell to.

Contracts, Rights, and Magazine publishing jargon

What does it mean when a magazine states on their website: We are looking for First World Exclusive Rights for six months and after that the rights revert back to the author?

Exclusive rights—excluding the story being sold elsewhere

Nonexclusive rights—can be sold elsewhere

First time rights—the first time the story is sold

North American Rights—the story being sold in America

World rights—the story being sold anywhere in the world

Sunset clause—the rights revert back to an author after a certain amount of time or on a certain date

*Often magazines say the rights revert back x months after publication, but it is important to know what happens if a story isn't published by Y date.

Reprints—a story that has already been published is now considered a reprint and can be sold for nonexclusive or reprint rights.

Multiple submissions (Mults)—submitting more than one story at once

Simultaneous submissions (Sims)—submitting the same story to multiple markets at once.

In a contact look for:

*How much are you being paid and when are you being paid

*How long are the rights are exclusive

*At what point do the rights revert back to you

*What happens if you they don't publish the story (they rarely say this but it is good if they do!)

SFWA's model contract for a magazine

<http://www.sfw.org/2015/09/sfw-releases-a-new-model-magazine-contract/>

Cover Letter Sample

Cover Letter Rules:

1. Read the magazine's directions.
2. Keep it as brief as possible.
3. Don't undersell yourself. If you have publishing credits or relevant experience, say that. If you don't, DO NOT say that you have never sold a piece or you are unpublished.

July 8, 2015

To the Editor:


I would like to submit my science fiction story, "A Mother's Arms," to be considered for your publication. It is about 8,200 words. The story is about an alien mother who intends to destroy the human invaders who killed her baby octopillars. The story takes place on the same alien world as "The Day of the Nuptial Flight" which I previously sold to Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction and is in the similar vein of alien-positive stories.


I have sold 100 stories to markets like Daily Science Fiction, Orson Scott Card's Intergalactic Medicine Show, Sword and Laser, and Cosmos.

Thank you for your time.


Sarina Dorie
delilah134@gmail.com


 Sarina
Date


 Sarina
Do you know the editor's name or editors' names? If so, address to the correct person.


 Sarina April 23, 2016
Include the title of story.

[Reply](#) [Resolve](#)

 Sarina
Include the word count.

 Sarina
Give a one sentence description.

 Sarina
If you have sold the story previously and it is reprint, mention that. If you have sold stories previously to this editor, mention it.

 Sarina
List your credentials: stories you have sold, relevant work you have done related to what you are writing about, novels you have sold, etc.

 Sarina
Closing.

Your Turn to Write a Cover Letter

Date _____

To _____, (use editors name or say editors/Editor)

I would like to submit my _____ (genre),
 " _____ " (title) to be
 considered for your publication. It is _____ words. The story is about
 (describe story in one or two sentences: character, setting,
 conflict) _____

I have previously sold _____

Closing,

_____ your name