

AUTHOR APPEARANCES

GUIDANCE FOR FESTIVALS



Authors are usually delighted to be invited to appear at festivals. The following information and checklist are provided in order to ensure author appearances are handled as smoothly and fairly as possible, in the interests of the author, the festival and the audience.

ENGAGING AN AUTHOR

When arranging your event all significant points should be confirmed in writing with the author, and (if relevant) their publisher or agent as soon as possible. Any points in relation to obligations or permissions (e.g. event recordings or publicity requirements) must be agreed at the time the author is first contacted.

Festival organisers tell us they tend to receive a better response when communicating by email, as opposed to post. Authors vary in their approach and neither form is reliable so it can avoid later misunderstandings if you use both.

THE EVENT

Live performances can be nerve-racking enough, so the author will need to know all the particulars of the event itself well in advance. This goes beyond the obvious whens and wheres – the more the author knows about what to expect and how to prepare the more confident they will feel and the better your event will be. A little TLC goes a long way!

When

- the date of the event
- the time of the event
- the parallel events/sessions taking place (as this may affect audiences)

What

- the purpose and title of the event
- the length of the event
- the nature of the event (reading, talk, panel discussion), how much should be the author's presentation or a Q&A session
- how the author will be introduced/described (in both the event itself and any promotion)
- the programme's description of the event
- the event sponsor

Who

- whether there will be a chairperson and if so who they are and how they can be contacted
- the name and contact details of the organiser, including the details of a named person who can be contacted on the day
- who else is taking part, and if the author can or should contact them in advance
- the expected profile of the audience

Where

- the nature of the venue (staging, lighting, etc.)
- the availability of technical equipment and assistance in its use

RIGHTS AND LEGAL FORMALITIES

Recording events

If you wish to make a recording (or printed or podcast version) of the event, the author's permission must be obtained. To avoid misunderstanding and awkwardness, ensure you clarify your intentions and obtain permission at the outset. Authors may not be willing to agree, for a variety of reasons; it may inhibit how they talk or the presentation could be one they want to repeat.

Identification

Clarify in advance if and what ID you require from the author.

Public Liability Insurance

Ensure you inform the author if you require individuals to possess public liability insurance.

Exclusion Areas

We have seen a worrying trend for festivals to demand that an author does not appear at another festival or event within a specified distance and time period – sometimes as much as three months. Such clauses should be avoided as they are unnecessary and unfair; there is no reason to believe other events have an impact on ticket sales and such restrictions may prevent an author from undertaking a tour. If you do wish to impose an exclusion clause then your fee should compensate the author in full for the lost opportunities.

BEFORE & AFTER

When engaging an author it is important to consider the arrangements beyond the event itself.

The author needs to know where they are going and when, how they will get there and (extremely important) who they are meeting. Contact details (emails and mobile numbers) should be exchanged and maps provided. Let the author know if they will need accommodation and who is responsible for booking accommodation and travel. Will they have a reserved parking space? Is there anything they should know about accessing the festival site?

Explain the arrangements for refreshments and where the author can relax or prepare before and after the event. Ask the author about any dietary requirements or disabilities of which you should be aware. Are they allowed to bring a partner or friend with them – or a dog? Is there Wi-Fi?

Who will be in control of the bookselling arrangements and supplying books? What do you require the author to bring? Can you photocopy materials if necessary?

What information will you want from the author in advance? Website address and social media handles, details of latest and forthcoming books?

PAYMENT & EXPENSES

Tax and National Insurance

When paying freelance authors, neither tax nor NI should be deducted. Most authors are self-employed (even where they invoice as a limited company) and a one-off engagement does not create a contract of employment.

VAT

Authors who are VAT-registered are legally obliged to charge VAT on top of both the fee and expenses.

Fees

The negotiation of fees is a matter for individuals. However, all festivals – especially those with commercial sponsors, and any festival where the public pays for tickets – should offer reasonable fees as a matter of course. Fees should take into account travel and preparation time as well as actual performance time. They should also take into account the annual salary an author would expect to earn as a freelance. We recommend Andrew Bibby's reckoner, www.andrewbibby.com/reckoner.html, which shows daily rates to equate with different salaries. Using that reckoner a fee of £100 equates to an annual salary of just £9000, or £150 to an annual salary of £13,500 (The NASUWT 2013 salaries for Leading Practitioners (excluding London and the Fringe) are between £37,836 - £57,520, which would equate to a fee of around £400 to £600).

The author should be paid within 30 days of the event.

Expenses

Will it be you or the publisher who is paying the author's travel and subsistence expenses? Will they be paid in advance or arrears?

Invoice

Does the author need to supply an invoice? Assuming yes, does it need a reference number or other identifier? To whom, at what address, should the invoice be sent? Does the author need to supply receipts?

Cancellation

If the event is cancelled the author must be given notice. If the booking is conditional, this must be clarified at the outset and any cancellation fees and timings must be made clear. We suggest:

- The author must be paid in full if the event is cancelled within six weeks of the event date;
- The author must be paid 50% if the event is cancelled earlier;
- Any out of pocket expenses already incurred must be reimbursed whenever the event is cancelled.

WHY THE SOA BELIEVES AUTHORS SHOULD BE PROPERLY PAID

- A talk involves preparation and travelling time (so for the author an event will rarely take up less than a full working day in practice).
- Authors earn their living as freelancers. If a festival is asking the author to give up a day of their time for professional purposes, it is only fair to pay for that time.
- Everyone else involved in running the festival is being paid.
- If the festival is charging the public to attend, the author should be entitled to a share of the monies generated.
- The sponsors of big festivals are wealthy, and they are demanding ever more from their speakers – authors should not feel that they are somehow being disloyal or unsupportive of the festival staff if they ask for a reasonable fee.
- The more the festival seeks to take, the better the author should be paid. For example, if the writer is being asked to allow their event to be recorded for public dissemination, they should be compensated appropriately in addition to their speaking fees.
- We strongly believe that payment in kind is not an acceptable alternative.

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The Society of Authors is a company registered in England No. 19993 and an independent trade union

CHECKLIST FOR FESTIVAL ORGANISERS



TO CONFIRM WITH THE AUTHOR	
<i>The following should be agreed in writing as far in advance of the event as possible.</i>	
The date and time of event.	
Location (site and precise venue) of event	
When you will require the author to arrive/be present. Can they stay for the rest of the festival? Are they welcome to attend other events? Do they need to book tickets? Are complimentary tickets available for companions, publicists or others?	
The nature of the venue (e.g. lecture theatre, informal circle) and any relevant features (e.g. poor lighting).	
The purpose and title of the event. Is it part of a strand of sessions within the festival programme?	
How you will introduce/describe the author in the event and in any programme, promotion or publicity. Biographical details are de facto personal and should be approved by the author in each instance.	
The expected audience profile and size (e.g. aspiring writers, reading group, general public). What parallel sessions are taking place (this can affect attendance).	
The nature of the session (reading, talk, panel discussion).	
Who is taking part in the event? Will the author be on his/her own, and/or chaired, and/or with fellow panellists? If so, who are they? Can/should the author contact any of them in advance and, if so, how?	
The number and length of the author's session(s) within the event, and how much of any session should be a presentation by the author and how much left for questions and answers.	
The event sponsor(s).	
The availability of technical equipment (projector, PowerPoint, internet connection). Can the author check the site before the talk? Can you provide someone to check that the equipment functions, and be on site in case it fails? How far in advance will an author need to provide you with any presentation materials?	
Whether you wish to record the event, in what manner (audio/audio-visual/transcription) and for what purpose (podcast/website/monetisation). How this will be compensated?	
Whether the author will need public liability insurance.	
Whether the author needs to bring ID and in what form.	
Who is meeting the author, when and where?	
Will the author need accommodation and who will pay for and organise this?	
Who is responsible for booking travel tickets?	
Will a parking space be reserved for the author?	
What is the position if the author would like to bring/travel with a partner – or a dog?	
What are the arrangements for refreshments? Are these provided/reimbursed?	
Is the author obliged or welcome to stay for refreshments or a meal with the audience or other participants?	
Is there an area in which the author can relax/prepare before and/or after the event?	
Is the author expected to bring support materials e.g. a copy of their own book, or handouts? May they do so if they wish? Can you photocopy materials if needed?	

If you can offer authors the chance to sell their own books, who will sort out the arrangements for supplying books (generally the author or their publisher, sometimes a local bookshop)? Will someone (not the author) be on hand to sell the books?	
What fees will be paid?	
Whether the payment of fees is taxable. When paying freelance authors, neither tax nor NI should be deducted. Most authors are self-employed (even where they invoice as a limited company) and a one-off engagement does not create a contract of employment.	
Whether the author is VAT-registered. Authors who are VAT-registered are legally obliged to charge VAT on top of both the fee and expenses.	
What expenses will be paid and by whom? Will it be you or the publisher who is paying the author's travel and subsistence expenses? Does the author need to supply receipts? Will they be paid in advance?	
When will the author be paid? It should be within 30 days of the event.	
Does the author need to supply an invoice? Where should it be sent? Does it need a reference number or other identifier?	
If the event is cancelled, how much notice will the author be given? The author should be refunded any expenses already incurred. If the author has had to turn down other engagements, or is otherwise left out of pocket e.g. because of a late cancellation, they should be paid the full fee.	
TO REQUEST	
<i>Ensure you request the following from the author in a timely manner. You may also have other information or items that you require which are not listed here.</i>	
Contact details: email, landline phone, mobile phone, postal address	
Online information: website, blog, Twitter handle, Facebook page, etc.	
Details of latest and forthcoming books/projects	
Biographical information	
Contact details for their publisher/agent/publicist (if relevant)	
Next of kin details (in case of emergency)	
Details and requirements of any disabilities	
Any dietary requirements	
TO PROVIDE	
<i>The following should be provided for the author as far as possible in advance of the event.</i>	
Names and contact details for the event organiser and the point of contact on the day, including emails and mobile phone numbers.	
A map of how to reach the location of the festival site and information on public transport.	
A map of the site itself.	