

FESTIVAL APPEARANCES

GUIDANCE FOR AUTHORS



This guide is aimed at authors. The SoA also has [guidance for festivals](#).

WHY APPEAR AT FESTIVALS?

Appearing at a festival is great publicity and a chance to sell some books. You can meet devoted fans and gain new audiences, network with other authors and industry professionals and the experience has the potential to be extremely enjoyable! It is also, of course, a source of income in itself - or should be...

In a 2010 survey of authors we discovered that, as well as 'fun', the most frequently used descriptions of appearances were 'exhausting' and 'waste of time'. Poor hospitality, bad manners, inaccurate or absent publicity, 15 minutes speaking for several days of preparation and travel and not getting paid, or being paid less than other authors, are common causes of frustration.

In 2015 we surveyed festivals and wrote to them with guidance notes and [Minimum Practice Guidelines](#). We will continue to work with festivals to ensure they treat authors fairly and make the experience of an author appearance successful and enjoyable for all parties. The onus of organisation and communication should be on organisers, but we have provided these notes for authors to ensure you know your rights and what to watch out for.

ARRANGEMENTS

All significant points should be confirmed well in advance in writing, with you, and (if relevant) your publisher or agent. You should ask for the contract terms to be sent to you when you agree to appear. You should feel comfortable that you are aware what is expected of you and how you will be recompensed. There is a checklist at the end of this document.

THE EVENT

Live performances can be nerve-racking enough, so you will want to know all the particulars of the event itself well in advance. This goes beyond the obvious whens and wheres - the more you know about what to expect and how to prepare the more confident you will feel.

When

- the date of the event
- the time of the event - 9am will not appeal to most audiences, in the slot after lunch the audience may be drowsy. A children's event on a Saturday will usually attract more than a mid-week or Sunday 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) and how much will be, for instance, 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, 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 you 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

There is a growing tendency for sponsors to request the right to record the event and take all rights in the recording. They should seek permission for this well in advance and generally a recording should attract a fee and be given under limited licence terms, e.g. a non-exclusive licence for two years for promotional purposes only. There are various reasons you may not wish to give your permission; it may inhibit how you talk or the presentation could be one you want to repeat.

Identification

Clarify in advance if and what ID the festival requires from you.

Public Liability Insurance

The festival should tell you if they require you to hold public liability insurance. If so, the SoA has an exclusive low-rate PLI scheme which you can take advantage of: www.societyofauthors.org/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 a festival does impose an exclusion clause then the fee should compensate the author in full for the lost opportunities.

PAYMENT

Fees

The SoA strongly believes that authors should be paid for all appearances, for the following reasons:

- 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 the 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.
- Payment in kind is not an acceptable alternative.

Authors should ask for a reasonable fee. Our recent surveys show most festivals do pay authors and the Arts Council has agreed that it will not sponsor events where the author is not paid.

Observed rates

Fees for performing at literary festivals can range from zero to more than the average author earns over a whole year, depending on the festival and the status of the author. Festivals vary enormously in size and wealth. However, well-established festivals – especially those with commercial sponsors, and any festival where the public pays for tickets – should offer reasonable fees as a matter of course. Variable rates, e.g. discriminating between authors writing for children or adults, or between novelists and poets, are unacceptable. Under competition law the SoA cannot set ‘recommended fees’. However we have observed the following which may be useful when negotiating the amount you are paid:

- In practice, festival fees range from zero to £400+
- Many festivals pay in the region of £100–£250 (plus expenses)
- In Scotland for events part-subsidised by Scottish Book Trust, the fee is set at £150 per session
- Chair’s rates vary widely – some pay the same as other speakers, some less and some more – from £75–£150 (plus expenses)

When negotiating a fee, [Andrew Bibby’s ‘Freelance Ready Reckoner’](#) can be a useful tool. This is also a handy way to express the real worth of what a festival is offering you and making your case. Remember that you should also be factoring preparation, travel and other time lost to the appearance.

It is also worth inquiring and considering how else your work, in the form of an appearance, will be used. Many festivals record sessions and then share these. When negotiating a fee these rights and usages should be taken into account.

On occasion you may be willing to accept a low fee or no fee. This may be because you want to attend or support the festival or its cause, or because it is local and will involve little upheaval on your part, or because you know the people involved and feel confident that it will be enjoyable and worthwhile. Even so, it is worth considering what your time is worth.

Publishers have been known to arrange for authors to attend festivals without considering whether or not a fee should be paid. If this happens, contact the festival organiser yourself to discuss your fee, or ask your publisher to do so.

Expenses

Expenses should be – and it seems almost invariably are – paid for festival appearances. Clarify from the outset whether it is the festival or your publisher who will be picking up the tab and whether expenses will be paid in advance or in arrears.

Tax and National Insurance

Festivals should not deduct tax or NI from freelance authors for one-off appearances, as these do not create a contract of employment. Of course the author will need to declare the earnings and pay tax in the normal way.

VAT

If you are VAT-registered you are legally obliged to charge VAT on top of both the fee and expenses. It is important to ensure that you have clarified this with the organisers from the start. Some festivals do insist the fee is VAT-inclusive, which in practice means you receive a lower rate of pay.

When should I be paid?

Payment should be made within 30 days of the event.

Invoice

In most cases you will need to supply an invoice. A template and checklist is given at the end of this document. The organiser should confirm where to send the invoice, as well as letting you know if receipts are required for expenses.

Cancellation

If the event is cancelled you should be refunded any expenses incurred and are entitled to claim a full or partial fee. 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.

HOW TO GET A FESTIVAL APPEARANCE

Many festivals welcome direct approaches from authors. Make sure that you make your pitch as persuasively as possible and be careful to ensure that, like other performers, you will expect to be paid - even though you have made the initial contact.

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CHECKLIST FOR AUTHORS



TO AGREE WITH THE FESTIVAL AS EARLY IN THE DISCUSSIONS AS POSSIBLE	
1. THE EVENT ITSELF	
The purpose of the event, and the title(s) of your session(s).	
Date, time and precise location of the event.	
The profile of the audience (e.g. aspiring writers, experts in your field, the general public), and how many are expected. Is the event being held at the same time as others (as this may affect audiences)?	
The nature of the session (reading, talk, panel discussion). Will you be on your own, and/or chaired, and/or with fellow panellists? If so, who are they? Can/should you contact any of them in advance and, if so, how?	
The number and length of your session(s). How much of any session should be a presentation. How much left for questions and answers.	
What, if any, other work/activities are required of you?	
Name and contact details of the organiser.	
2. FEES & EXPENSES	
What fee will you be paid?	
Who will be paying your travel and subsistence expenses: the event host, or your publisher?	
Exactly what expenses may you charge for? Do you need to supply receipts? (The current Inland Revenue mileage rates, allowable as deductible expenses for tax purposes when using your car for business purposes, are 40p per mile for the first 10,000 miles, 25p per mile after that. Some organisations offer less.)	
Is the event being sponsored and, if so, by whom?	
Will you need accommodation? If so, who is responsible for booking travel tickets and accommodation?	
With expenses like hotel bills, will the organisers pay them in advance? If not, what is the arrangement?	
If you are VAT-registered, tell the event host and explain that VAT must be added to both your fee and expenses.	
When will you be paid? (It should be within 30 days of the event.)	
3. BOOK SALES	
If the event can offer you the chance to sell your own books, who will sort out the arrangements for supplying books?	
Who will be supplying the books: you? Your publisher (or might fliers to be forwarded to the publisher be a safer bet)? A local bookseller (who may be able to offer a discount, or a modest commission to the event organiser on sales)? Will someone (not you) be on hand to sell the books?	

4. TECHNICAL & PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS	
The availability of technical equipment (projector, PowerPoint, sound system, internet connection). Do you need to hand in e.g. PowerPoint presentations in advance? Can you check the site before the talk? Will someone be on site in case it fails?	
Is there any intention to record your event and, if so, is that acceptable to you? If you are happy to be recorded, check that you have editorial approval over any cuts or alterations, and that you will be properly credited.	
Does the organiser have your name, contact details, website, twitter handle, and details of your latest/forthcoming books?	
If relevant, does the organiser have the name and contact details for your publisher/publicist/agent?	
Who is meeting you, when and where? Do you have each other's mobile phone numbers?	
A map of how to reach the event, and details of suitable public transport.	
Will a parking space be reserved for you?	
What is the position if you would like to bring/travel with a partner - or a dog?	
Do you have any disabilities of which the organisers should be aware?	
The arrangements for refreshments, and any special dietary requirements. Also, if relevant, are you obliged, or would you like, to eat/stay for drinks with the audience? Might you have to mingle with them before your talk (which many speakers dislike)?	
Are you expected to bring support materials e.g. a copy of your book, or handouts? May you do so if you wish? Can the venue photocopy materials for you if needed?	
5. INVOICING & CANCELLATION	
Do you need to supply an invoice? Assuming yes, do you need a reference number or other identifier? To whom, at what address, should you send the invoice?	
If the event is cancelled, how much notice will you be given and what will you be paid? (You should be offered your full fee. As a minimum, any bona fide expenses incurred should be refunded.)	

INVOICE TEMPLATE



This is a template for an invoice which you are likely to be required to supply. The festival should confirm if you need to include a reference for them and who to send it to. They should also confirm whether you will be required to send receipts.

Your name
Your address
Your email
Your phone number

The contact's name/department
Festival's name
Festival office address

Festival reference: The festival may supply a reference
Your reference: optional but particularly advisable if you are VAT-registered.
Pick a numbering system which suits you.

INVOICE

The date of the invoice

Title and date of the event	Amount
The fee	£XXX.XX
Details of agreed expenses (e.g. travel)	£XX.XX
More details of expenses (e.g. accommodation)	£XXX.XX
More details of expenses (e.g. refreshments)	£XX.XX
Total payable:	£XXX.XX

UTR: your ten-digit Unique Taxpayer's Reference number

NI no.: your National Insurance number

VAT no.: your VAT number

Payment details

Payment can be made by BACS or cheque made out to 'your bank account name'.

BACS details

Name of bank: A. N. Bank Ltd
Branch address: 81, Road, Townsville
Sort code: 12-34-56
Name of account: Ms Author
Account number: 1234 5678

You may wish to add: *This service was provided by a self-employed taxpayer. It is therefore a booking condition that payment [plus VAT if you are VAT-registered] be made in full, as per invoice, and that income tax etc. should not be deducted at source.*

You may also want to add: *Payment is due within 30 days of invoice date. Statutory interest will be charged on overdue payments.*