

# Judges Guidelines

## Unpublished Category

The judge's guidelines cover two aspects of judging:

1. What to look for when evaluating the quality of this year's submissions
2. How the judging process works.

At the end of the document, you will find the following form:

1. *Judges Information Form* – To be completed by each judge and submitted to the Awards Manager no later than **30th Sept or one week after agreeing to be a judge, whichever is later.**

## Evaluating the submissions

### *What is a crime book?*

The Awards are for excellence in *crime writing*, not just mystery writing. Mysteries are certainly a major subgenre within crime fiction, but they are by no means the only one.

Broadly speaking, you can look at a crime as any kind of offence or potential offence against the person or the wider community. Crime is at the core of a crime book, whether the premise of the book is to solve the crime, prevent the crime, perpetrate the crime, try the criminal in court, understand the criminal, etc. As long as there is (1) some kind of crime that is a major element in the book and (2) someone who has something to do with this crime – e.g., wants to solve it (whodunit), wants to prevent it (thriller), is the criminal (psychological suspense, caper), etc. – you have a crime novel. Conversely, if you can remove the crime from the story and the book can still stand on its own, the book is not a crime story.

The crime does not have to be murder. There are plenty of crimes that are not, such as, theft, fraud, and terrorism. Moreover, the setting can be anywhere and any time in history; you can even have a crime novel set in a fantasy or science fiction world.

Please consider each manuscript on its own merits. There is no reason why an excellent cozy or humorous mystery shouldn't win the best unpublished manuscript award. An award-winning manuscript does not have to contain a message, nor does it have to change the reader's life. It must, however, be well-written and well-executed, and an exemplar of a manuscript in its subgenre, whether it's a police procedural, a thriller, a traditional mystery, a caper, or a cozy.

## ***Points to consider***

- Does the book fulfill the “promise” it makes to the reader? This promise may range from illuminating the dark side of human nature to providing a rollicking entertaining read, but the reader should feel satisfied when they shut the book.
- Does the author balance show and tell (action versus exposition)? Does the author involve the reader in the characters’ lives and actions?
- Is the puzzle or central problem presented in the book interesting and challenging?
- Is there an internal logic/consistency, and believability to all the elements (plot, characters, dialogue, facts, etc.) of the book? Do all the elements hold together and make the book greater than the sum of its parts?
- Does the book have a spark that elevates it above other similar books? Is the book memorable (in a good way)?
- How much work do you think the manuscript will need before being publishable?

## **Judging Process**

All submissions will be in digital PDF format and be accessible through a Dropbox account. The Awards Manager will email judges with the details. Judging for this category is done blind and a scorecard is used to determine the longlist, shortlist, and winner.

There are two rounds of judging, first to determine the longlist, then shortlist and winner. Each judge is asked to fill out a scorecard for each submission, for both rounds. Completed scorecards will be submitted to the Awards Manager who will total all the scores.

**NOTE:** Please keep scorecard comments constructive as they will be sent back to participants.

**NOTE:** If there is any identifying information in the body of the manuscript notify the Awards Manager immediately.

### *First Round*

Judges will read the first 5,000 words of the manuscript and the 500-word synopsis. Judges will score each entry using the scorecard provided. Completed scorecards will be sent to the Awards Manager and based on the submission scores, a list of 10 entrants will be selected for the longlist.

All scorecards must be given to the Awards Manager, no later than **Jan 10**, who will contact entrants to submit full manuscripts to go on to the second round of judging.

### *Second Round*

After reading the longlisted manuscripts, judges will fill out and return a scorecard for each entry. Based on the submission scores, a list of 5 entrants will be selected for the shortlist and the winner will also be determined.

All Scorecards must be filled out and returned to the Awards Manager on or before **April 1**.

## **Important Points**

- 1.** In the event of a tie, a jury discussion will decide the tiebreaker for the entries involved in the tie only.
- 2.** No judge should exert undue pressure on the other judges. If any judge feels such pressure email the Awards Manager.
- 3.** Judges are not to post reviews on submissions in the category they are judging.
- 4.** No author or character should be dismissed because of gender, culture, religion, or origin.

# Critical Timeline

- **Mid to late September** - ALL judges will be contacted to fill out and submit the Judges Information Form.
- **October 15** - Entries for the **Unpublished Award** must be emailed (PDF) by October.
- **November 15** - the **Unpublished** submissions should be with the judges. A Dropbox folder will be set up for Judges to access PDF Submissions.
- **January 10: Unpublished judges, this is the final deadline for the long list.** All scorecards for the longlist are due. However, judges can send completed scorecards to the Awards Manager prior to the Jan 10. The Awards Manager will then contact the authors on the long list requesting their full manuscript in digital format. Participants will have approx 1 Week (sometimes 2 if there are issues) from the time of request to submit their full ms. The judges will be informed when longlisted entries are received.
- **April 1: deadline for all judges to submit their scorecards for the shortlist and winner.** All scorecards should be sent to the Awards Manager. However, judges can send them to the Awards Manager prior to April 1<sup>st</sup> if they are completed early.
- **April 19, 2023, the shortlists are announced.** Tickets for the Awards Gala go on sale the next day. (if there is a Gala)
- **TBD– Winners announced at the Awards Gala. (if there is a gala)**

# Communication

For all concerns regarding the judging process and the delivery of submissions contact:

**Awards Manager:** Ludvica Boota, [awards@crimewriterscanada.com](mailto:awards@crimewriterscanada.com)

***Other Contacts:***

CWC Executive Director: Alison Bruce, [ed@crimewriterscanada.com](mailto:ed@crimewriterscanada.com)

Board and Awards Committee Chair: Hyacinthe Miller [board-chair@crimewriterscanada.com](mailto:board-chair@crimewriterscanada.com)

# Judge Information Form

<b>Judging Category</b>	
<b>First Name</b>	
<b>Last name</b>	
<b>Telephone number</b>	
<b>e-mail</b>	
<b>Secondary E-mail (if applicable)</b>	

Unpublished Scorecard - **AVAILABLE IN EXCEL**

Unpublished Manuscript Title:

Score 1-10  
(1 low; 10  
high)

Please briefly explain scores of 4 or lower

- 1. **PLOT:** do the opening pages pull you into the story?
- 2. **PLOT:** does the premise have something that makes it fresh?
- 3. **PLOT:** does the plot have the potential to sustain an entire book?
  
- 4. **PACE:** is the pace working for the story?
- 5. **SETTING:** does the setting give a sense of time and place and does it fit the tone of the story?
- 6. **DIALOGUE:** is the dialogue purposeful, plausible, free from info-dumping, and is it clear who's speaking?
- 7. **STYLE/VOICE:** does the writing have a certain something that keeps you reading?
- 8. **CHARACTERS:** are the characters compelling and are their actions and reactions believable?
- 9. **POINT OF VIEW:** is the POV clear at all times?
- 10. **PUBLISHABILITY:** how ready is the manuscript to be published?



Total:

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Judge's Overall Comments

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