

Flash Fiction Competition FAQs

Below are the answers to some frequently asked questions that we receive every year. If you have any further questions, do get in touch at schools.liaison@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk.

Q. Can international students enter?

- Answer: No, unfortunately we are no longer accepting entries from pupils attending schools outside of the UK. As a Faculty, we are in the process of making our work with schools more targeted in line with our aim of promoting language learning across all levels of the UK education system. We apologise for any disappointment caused by this change.

Q. Can teachers give their pupils feedback?

- Answer: We would prefer that submissions be the students' own work, with as little intervention from teachers as possible. The aim of the competition is to encourage students to improve/use their skills of narrative flair, creativity, attention to storytelling, and linguistic courage. Of course, linguistic proficiency will be taken into account but we're not looking for perfection. We would rather receive imaginative entries that are slightly flawed than linguistically perfect stories that lack more creative qualities.

Q. Can my story be more than 100 words?

- Answer: No. The word limit is 100 words: stories over this limit will be ineligible. As it is flash fiction, one of the skills we are looking to see demonstrated is the ability to construct a narrative within a very tight word constraint.

Q. Do elisions and hyphenated words count as one or two words?

- Answer: They count as one word e.g. c'est, qu'il, est-ce.

Q. Can native speakers enter?

- Answer: Yes. We are happy to receive entries from native speakers. We are keen to encourage creativity and literary enthusiasm regardless of the entrant's experience of the language. We'll be looking for qualities like narrative structure, imagination, storytelling etc., as well as quality of language use. The judges might well be able to guess if a student is a native speaker anyway and will factor that in.

Q. Will every participant receive a certificate?

- Answer: No. We generally receive around 1500 entries to the competitions and do not have the resources to issue certificates to everyone. Only winners, runners up, and highly commended pupils will receive certificates.

Q. Can I write a poem?

- Answer: Yes, pupils can submit a poem but should be aware that the aim of the competition is to encourage students to use/develop their skills of narrative flair, creativity, and attention to storytelling in the target language. Therefore, it is important that submissions have a narrative and present a complete story, regardless of form chosen.

Q. Can I look online for translations of words I am unsure of?

- Answer: Pupils are fine to look up words or phrases in a dictionary, but we recommend that they don't use translation software to translate their stories from English into the target language as this software is often inaccurate and we want give students a chance to be creative in a foreign language.

Q. Is the title included in the word count?

- Answer: No, it is just the story that is counted in the 100 words, the title is separate.

Q. Is it possible for me to write a story in French/Spanish/German even if I am not studying it at school?

- Answer: Yes, it is absolutely fine for you to write a story even if you are not studying the language at school. We do not ask what you are studying when you submit your story.

Q. I am home educated. Is it possible for me to enter the Competition(s)?

- Answer: Yes, absolutely! You can indicate that you are home educated on the submission portal when it asks for your school name.

Q. I sent my story for the competition but now want to make changes. How can I ensure that the final version is used rather than my original entry?

- Answer: You can re-submit your story using the submission portal. As long as you use the same email address each time, the latest version of your entry will replace any previous submissions.

Q. Can I upload a picture of my handwritten short story or would you prefer for it to be typed?

- Answer: We would prefer stories to be typed as it makes it easier for the judges to read and process all the entries. You are welcome to add a picture to the story though!

Q. My friend and I would like to work together to submit a story. Can we enter as a pair?

- Answer: Entries to the competition must be submitted by individuals. If you would like to work together, you could submit one story each but help each other with your stories. Unfortunately, our submission portals aren't set up to accept multiple names and details for each entry.

Q. Can I enter twice?

- Answer: Only one story per student is allowed, as when using your email address, another submission would delete the previous one if you enter a second story.

Q. I am a teacher. Can I upload my students' entries on their behalf?

- Answer: No. For reasons of GDPR compliance, teachers cannot enter on their students' behalf: students must enter the competition themselves.

Q. When will the winner be announced?

- Answer: There's no fixed date but we aim to publish the results by the end of May.

General information about the competition, as well as the submission forms can be found [here](#).

Best of luck in the competition(s)!