

Weekly News Short Story Guidelines

Thank you for your interest in The Weekly News fiction section. We hope you find these guidelines useful.

The Weekly News has a largely older readership which is evenly split between the sexes, so we are looking for general interest tales — crime, humour (especially), spooky stories (although we've had plenty of these recently), or “coffee break” dramas which wouldn't be out of place in any popular TV soap.

At the moment, we're also interested in stories with a bit more “edge” that are slightly darker.

Although an old-fashioned love story may occasionally be appropriate, we're not looking for “slushy” romantic fiction, or anything “twee”. And although it's a popular style, we don't generally take “chick-lit”.

Similarly, we don't want anything too racy or gory. As The Weekly News is a family paper, we wouldn't use anything with any sexual content.

Many stories we publish have an interesting twist to surprise the reader, as these seem to be popular. But if your twist is “it was all a dream” or “he/she/it was a ghost”, or the main character is actually a pet, it won't get through!

- Aim for something light-hearted, perhaps centred around family life or a recognisable situation.
- If your main character is strong enough, you can have them carry the whole story.
- A positive outcome is favoured, but this can be reached by a good bit of double-crossing, or the comeuppance of the “baddie”.
- Be playful – have some fun with your characters at their expense, ie in embarrassing social situations.
- We also like sensitive stories which may involve a death, an illness, a fear, etc. If the situation doesn't come across as too dark and depressing and has an uplifting end, then it may make it through.

Stories can vary in length from a minimum of 1,200 to 1,500 words, though we reserve the right to edit them as appropriate.

Also, we rarely accept stories written in the first person or present tense.

Please note that at present we use two fiction items each week.

We always have plenty of stories to read through, so it could be a couple of months at least before we can respond to submissions.

Due to time constraints, we can only reply to stories which are accepted. If you haven't heard from us within three months of submission, it means you have been unsuccessful on this occasion and you're free to submit the story elsewhere.

Here are some DOs:

- Use strong, identifiable characters – but remember they don't always have to be likeable.
- Use natural-sounding speech. We tend to avoid dialect, as we like to be a bit “geographically vague” to add to the universality of the stories.
- Check that your historical facts fit your time-frame and characters.
- Be thought-provoking if you want – be topical.
- Read and check your punctuation and paragraphing. The easier your work is on the eye, the easier it is to make an informed decision.
- Work within reality – this is fiction, but it does have to be believable.
- Do include your email address, postal address and phone number on your story.
- Full stories, please. We can't get enough detail or “feel” for a piece from a pitch or synopsis.

And some specific DON'Ts:

- No murdered spouses, dreams or pet twists.
- No first person or present-tense stories.
- No hard copy.

E-mail is now our only method of delivery. Please send to:
weeklynewsfiction@dctmedia.co.uk

Thanks,
The Fiction Team.