

Beta Reader Program

The Women Who Write Beta Reader program is up and running!

This is a great resource for those members who have finished a novel or memoir.

Think of Beta Reader feedback as the step before sending a novel out to an agent or editor.

How do you take advantage of this program?

The very first requirement is for the author to type the words “The End” on a completed manuscript. The author should then make sure all authors’ notes and unnecessary blank spaces are deleted. Typos should be out, and grammar should be correct. Formatting should be double spaced and 12 point type, Times New Roman.

In other words, the first step is to have a finished project.

After that, the manuscript must be printed on paper and bound. (A local print shop or Staples may be able to help with that.)

(Why paper? It is the preferred reading style of most members. It is also much easier to flip paper pages to check a plot point. Scrolling through an e-file can be frustrating. Paper also brings a much greater level of security.)

The next step is to decide what sort of feedback you are looking for and design a questionnaire to go along with your manuscript.

When all that is finished, it is time to contact the Beta Reader Moderator at betareaders@womenhowrite.org.

The Moderator will present the author with names of volunteer readers who seem to enjoy the genre of the novel. After two names are selected by the author, the Moderator will check with the volunteers and see if they have time to read the work.

When the readers are confirmed, the author will send the paper manuscript out along with a stamped self-address envelope so the work can be sent back.

There are no meetings or phone contact between author and reader. The reader has a month to read the novel and mail it back. Any problems should be brought to the attention of the Moderator by e-mail betareaders@womenhowrite.org.

FAQ

How do I know if my novel is ready for the program?

If it is finished and printed.

A word of advice, however, the Beta Readers program should not be the first point of feedback for the work, unless you are a very experienced author. Individual chapters or overall plot arc should have been discussed in writer's groups prior to submitting the whole work to the Beta Readers program.

What about Poetry?

A whole book of poems may be submitted for feedback on the collection.

This isn't the program for an individual poem, novel chapter or individual very short story.

What about Children's?

Middle Grade or YA would be read the same as a novel.

Picture book is more of a challenge and is a genre that is probably best in a critique group setting. However, contact the Moderator and something may be arranged.

Is there a page minimum?

Thirty pages double spaced. If you write short stories or flash fiction please consider tying them up in a collection and submitting that way.