

The
Authors
Publish

QUICK-START
GUIDE TO

FLASH FICTION

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The Authors Publish Quick-Start Guide to Flash Fiction

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Authors Publish

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Introduction

This book is a guide to flash fiction. Short shorts. Condensed prose. Flash fiction doesn't wait for you. Its time is limited. It requires you to start right now, right in the middle of the action.

As a hybrid form, the short short looks a little like fiction and a little like poetry. But flash fiction will be the first to tell you: it has a personality entirely its own. For one, the flash tends to be more of a risk-taker than either of its parents. Like a sudden revelation or an unexpected transformational event, flash fiction will convince you to do things you might not otherwise do.

I think that's why flash fiction works as such a powerful tool for processing life's difficulties and complexities. The form facilitates the spontaneity necessary for transformation. Flash fiction works especially well for authors who need to integrate intense emotions, like writers in prisons or on mental health care programs. Young authors also tend to find the form conducive to fitting writing into their busy days. In the brief window of one classroom session, a young author can complete a flash story. If you find yourself in, or you are working with people in these populations, I hope this book gives you new tools to facilitate your efforts. But even if you don't, you might

find it beneficial to think of flash fiction as a container for your own ongoing moments of transformation.

Of course, there are many reasons to write flash fiction. Many writers find that their work improves when they challenge themselves to distill a story to its essence. Flash fiction asks a lot from its authors; its unforgiving form lays bare both the writer's most luminous gifts and hidden shortcomings.

At the same time, many authors find freedom in flash fiction since its nature invites wild experimentation. The form requires ingenuity for success, but flash fiction also accommodates frequent failure. You gain far more than you lose when you write an unsuccessful flash.

Some authors write flash fiction to add bulk to their publication record, and others compose short shorts to solicit feedback on their writing. Whatever your motivation, I hope that as you explore flash fiction in the pages ahead, you come to appreciate short short fiction just as it is, on its own terms.

You'll start in chapter one by considering the question: what is flash fiction? You'll have a chance to think through both the definable parameters and the indefinable qualities of the genre. If you're new to microforms, chapter two will help you start writing flash fiction. If you're an experienced author of short shorts, you can use chapter two to jumpstart your writing on a stagnant day. Then, in chapter three you'll learn how to tailor your editing skills to meet the unique

demands of flash fiction. Chapter four, “Quick Inspiration,” gives you brief insights about the genre to help you shift your perspective and refresh your enthusiasm whenever you’re stuck.

Chapters five and six give you tools to help you apply what you learned in the previous sections. Chapter five offers sixty flash fiction prompts, enough to help you establish a daily practice of writing flash fiction for two months or a weekly practice for a year. Finally, chapter six lists sixty publishers of flash fiction so you can start publishing your stories right away.

Flash fiction isn’t a newborn—its revelatory potential is the result of a long, global sojourn—but it has been reborn in our time. It is reasonable to speculate that our immersion in highly stimulating digital media has shortened our collective attention span, making the reemergence of flash fiction necessary for the survival of literature. But, I like to think that the rebirth of flash fiction is more than a last ditch effort to preserve the literary arts. Perhaps it also hints at the central purpose of an inviolable part of ourselves—a part that tends toward vitality and growth—that needs literature for its well being. Could it be that flash fiction—with its transformational potential—was born out of that necessity? I think so, but only you can know for sure.

Chapter One

Defining Flash Fiction

What Happens in a Flash

The flashpoint; in chemistry, it's the temperature at which a liquid catches fire; in politics, it's the tipping point where disagreements erupt in sudden violence. In flash fiction, it's the starting point. Flash fiction is born from white-hot combustion.

Since this is a quick start guide, let's get straight to it. Try this: close your eyes and picture your life story as a series of flashes — lightning strikes, snapped photographs, or blooming impressions left on your eyelids after a fireworks display. Now, choose one of those flashes — one small moment — and zoom in until you can see its cells. Look at it under a microscope and see if you can detect any movement in your still picture, any subtle transformation spawned by the emotional heat of the moment. Then, zoom out—way out—until you're standing on Earth viewing it as a shooting star. Don't get out your telescope; you don't have time. Just watch it sizzle and notice what happens before

and after — the plot that surrounds the flash. Then see if you can trace out the whole story implied within the flashpoint.

Now you have a sense of what happens in a flash. Flash fiction isn't just brief; rather, it employs brevity to accomplish its aim. When you went through the exercise above, perhaps you found that your flashpoint contained an epiphany that could only be delivered in a flash. In other words, perhaps a change was initiated in the heat of an instantaneous spark that could not have been set in motion by a slow burn.

At the same time, the flashpoint illuminates everything around it. The moment it flares, we understand what came before it and what lies beyond. Usually, flash fiction doesn't tell us what led to the flashpoint, nor does it often provide a full resolution to the tension from which it's born. But the narrative in which the flashpoint occurs is almost always implied in the flash itself. Isolated from linear time, the pivotal moment carries within it something of the past, present, and future—something, but not everything.

When much of the story is left unarticulated, the past remains ambivalent and the future retains its mystery. The present becomes the point at which the ocean meets the shore — an ever-shifting secret that will never be grasped. Perhaps it's this secret — boiling in our bottomless ocean—from which our flashpoints eventually ignite.

Practical Parameters

The first question most authors ask about flash fiction is, “How many words can I use?” This makes sense because, as we’ve discussed, flash fiction is defined by its brevity. But, it’s interesting to note that although this is true, no consensus dictates precisely how brief flash fiction must be. Though it must be short—short short—flash fiction is more aptly defined by the qualities that emerge from its condensed form rather than the number of its words.

Keeping that in mind, we can talk about some practical guidelines that might help you get started. But remember, they are only guidelines—not rules—intended to provide a mental framework within which the structure of a story can take shape.

Broadly speaking, flash fiction tends to range from around two-hundred-and-fifty to one-thousand words, or about one to three pages. We could label stories under five-hundred words “microfiction,” and we could call stories between seven-hundred-and-fifty and one-thousand words “sudden fiction.” Generally, works of fiction over one-thousand words end up in the “short story” pile.

You can use these word counts as guides to help you start writing flash fiction. You might find that accepting a prescribed length frees you to concentrate your creativity on the deeper, qualitative elements of your

story. Many authors find that the pressure of crafting a condensed story produces creative gems—those rare diamonds that seem to shine with a brilliance disproportionate to their small size.

But other authors find the exercise of adhering to a word count stifling. If you're one of these writers, you might want to save the practice of flash fiction for a day when it's difficult to write anything at all. On such a day, a short short might be just the medicine you need. Other times, the guidelines given here might help you categorize your story after it's already written. When you're writing, you're free to let your story be the guide: if it wants to be short, let it be short; if it wants to be long, let it be long.

As an alternative, if you're especially interested in publishing your flash fiction, you might choose to tailor your writing to the guidelines of a specific journal. As flash fiction becomes increasingly popular, more and more journals are seeking stories with exact word counts. For example, some journals are looking for stories of exactly fifty words. If you enjoy writing flash fiction and you want to publish your work more frequently, you might consider looking for these publishing opportunities and writing according to the prescribed parameters.

The next question many authors ask when they begin writing flash fiction is whether or not it needs to include all the elements of a traditional short story. Though many authors and editors would

respond, “absolutely,” authors of experimental flash fiction would disagree.

As you progress through your journey of flash writing, perhaps you’ll form your own response to this question. For now, it’s enough to be aware that some editors will require your flash fiction to express a linear narrative and display character development within a time-bound plot. Other editors will delight in stories that subvert these expectations. Many publications specify these parameters in their submission guidelines. If they don’t, you can get a sense of what they’re looking for by reading a journal’s past issues or online content.

Chapter Two

Getting Started

If you've never written flash fiction before, getting started might be the biggest obstacle in front of you. Some of you will find it fun to approach the genre for the first time, like meeting a new friend. Others of you might see the prospect of writing your first flash a little daunting, despite its small size. In either case, I suggest you start now. Yes, now. Because no matter how much you learn about flash fiction, you will only understand its charms and quirks by living with it—by writing and reading it day by day.

In chapter five you will find a collection of sixty flash fiction exercises. You could use these prompts as an occasional reference when you're out of ideas or as a teaching tool if you're leading a group of writers. However, they are particularly intended for you to use as a daily or weekly practice when you want to immerse yourself in the art of producing flash fiction. If you're brand new to the genre or if you're serious about improving your craft, I suggest using them in this way. There are enough prompts to help you write one flash a day for two months or one a week for a year.

I also suggest reading flash fiction regularly to get a sense of the larger conversation your stories will be a part of once they're published. A smart and simple way to start is to read flash fiction published in literary journals online. That way, you can get a sense of your own specific taste as well as the broad range of aesthetics employed in the genre. Chapter six offers a list of sixty literary journals that publish flash fiction. In addition to using this chapter to help you publish your own flash fiction, you can also use it as a reading list. I've highlighted which journals are available for free online to give you an immediate way to make reading flash fiction a part of your regular writing routine. It only takes a few minutes to read one flash fiction a day.

Now, let's get started! Perhaps the simplest way to begin is to set a timer for ten minutes and start writing. If you want, you can close your eyes while you write or change the color of the font on your computer to white. Try to keep writing for the whole ten minutes without stopping. The most important thing is that you trust the words as they emerge. Give the oddballs just as much space to speak as the expected sentences. This is a simple exercise, but not often easy. Take heart. Usually, when you're stuck, you're on the brink of the flashpoint.

Chapter Three

Editing Flash Fiction

Every once in a while, with practice, an exercise like that in chapter two results in a small miracle: a polished, publishable work of flash fiction. But usually, you will need to take what you've produced from the prompts in this book and edit them until the raw material is digestible. It's like cooking a meal. First, you gather the ingredients, and then you prepare them in a way that simultaneously expresses your taste and nourishes the people you're feeding. You consider the progression of the meal—how to stimulate the appetite of those who gather to savor your cooking, how to compose the main course in a way that offers the essential nutrients they need, and how to finish the meal with a taste that's recalled and requested for years to come.

And, you likely serve something raw to give the meal a sense of freshness. In the same way, you'll notice that some pieces of raw writing are best served untouched. Look for the parts that contain the most life: the most vibrant words, the juiciest sentences. In other words, look for the truth and don't try to change it. This will give your writing a sense of vitality you can't contrive through craft.

At the same time, flash fiction derives much of its energy from its condensed language. So, if you want to write lively flash fiction, you need to master the skill of editing. Every word in a flash has to flare.

That's why the first step in editing flash fiction is to cut extraneous material. But before you start trimming, take a moment to identify the heart of your story; the central desire of your main character and the flashpoint in which that desire is transformed. Your story exists *because of* this heart; anything separate from your story's heart is part of a different body, a different story.

You might find separate stories in non-essential details about the setting, the history, the characters, and so on. In longer stories, abundant details can add layers of meaning that deepen as the story progresses. But in micro fiction, heavily layered details can smother the flash. Try to include only the details that provide the fuel essential to the combustion of your flashpoint.

You might also find separate stories in sideline characters, bystanders who function like details in your story. In longer stories, these characters might add depth to your main, acting characters. But in flash fiction they will likely just steal the spotlight, which only has a moment to shine. Usually, flash fiction is most successful when it illuminates one or two—maybe three—characters.

Perhaps by this point flash fiction is starting to sound a bit barren. If so, this is a good time to remember that flash fiction often speaks

through silence. What you *don't* say in a story can be more revealing than what you articulate plainly. An implied detail or desire can wield the power of the ineffable or the force of all that's repressed and boiling beneath the surface. Or, it can tease the reader like a coveted secret almost contained. To keep this point in mind while editing, you can imagine that flash fiction is forever dressed in a poorly tied bathrobe.

But the essential flashpoint occurs when this bathrobe slips—seemingly by accident—and the author suddenly flashes the reader. In a flash, the bare truth is revealed. We've talked about the importance of condensing your flash fiction, but that effort is only meant to create the tension necessary for this moment of surprising revelation to occur.

So as you can see, even though flash fiction is short, it isn't sparse. It's filled with a load that longer stories can't bear. It's always bursting because it's always here and gone in a flash. No story can live that recklessly—not for months and years. But a flash doesn't have to sustain itself in time, only in memory.

After you've removed the clutter and saved what's essential, see if anything needs to be rearranged. It might be clear right away where things fit and where they don't. But if not, you might enjoy approaching this step playfully, like rearranging furniture on a whim. Try making ten copies of your story and think of them like ten

versions a room. Move things around until you're comfortable, unsettled, delighted, surprised—however the room invites you to feel. Notice how different arrangements enhance different aspects of your aesthetic.

Finally, you might find it helpful to share your story with readers and editors who can help you see aspects of your writing that can still be improved. One benefit of writing short short stories is that you can solicit frequent feedback on your writing. Since flash fiction is brief, it's easy to find willing readers. In fact, some authors write flash fiction just to improve their writing through abundant feedback. So, whether you plan to focus on flash fiction or primarily write in another genre, you can use your flashes to improve your writing overall. Just remember that your story is yours. Use the critiques you commission to uncover your story's natural light, knowing that you're the one who believed in its brilliance all along.

Chapter Four

Quick Inspiration

The brief flares of insight in this chapter are intended to help you when your practice of writing flash fiction becomes stale or stalls altogether. If you're new to writing short shorts or if you're reading this book for the first time, it might be helpful to take in all the bite-sized contemplations at once. Just know that it will be like eating a meal full of appetizers—difficult to digest. So I recommend coming back to this chapter whenever you need help as you work with the prompts in chapter five. Give yourself time to chew each mini-lesson. You might even want to make a habit of reading one quick insight each day before writing.

- Every person has a story; every story has a story, too. That is, every story has a secret it wants to tell its author.
- Take a step back from your story. Rather than asking, “Why am I telling this story?” ask, “Why do I tell stories?”
- The short short story is under time pressure, but it's adept at finding expansiveness within its limitations. It isn't holding its breath while trying to quickly stammer its truth; rather, it's breathing one full breath, completely aware that it's breathing.

- Is flash fiction too brief to say anything meaningful? If you have this doubt, imagine: How many volumes are written by one footstep of a character in the middle of a room with two opposing doors?
- Small, dazzling things are usually rare—that’s what makes them precious. But when we go out to find such a thing — say a songbird, orchid, gemstone, or flash story—we often find what we are really seeking just by setting the intention to look.
- Instead of speaking to fill silence, try choosing your words to reveal the meaning in the silence that surrounds them. In flash fiction, silence is the main speaker.
- In a flash, there isn’t time to do away with ambiguity. From this limitation, flash fiction expands.
- Think small: most of the time, life proceeds through tiny adjustments. But think: if you alter your course even slightly, in time you’ll arrive at an entirely different destination. Try to capture the significance of these (nearly) imperceptible shifts in your flashes.
- Imagine arranging your flash stories in front of you as if you were hanging paintings in an art gallery. Does a glance invite further contemplation?
- When you start writing today, forget what you think you know about flash fiction. Genres aren’t hard forms; rather, they’re soft

structures that shape themselves to fit the moment. Let go of prefab forms and see what shape flash fiction takes today.

- The iceberg: both authors and psychologists use this image as a reminder of what remains submerged. When we see an iceberg, we know it's just a hint of what's hidden in the ocean. Flash fiction is like an iceberg; most of the story is beneath the surface.
- If you write flash fiction daily, you might acclimate to the flashpoint. In other words, white-hot might become your everyday weather. If this happens, try changing something in your writing routine. Write by hand on something unusual or write with your non-dominant hand. Write in a new place. Speak into a tape recorder instead of writing. Make writing something you've never done before.
- In flash fiction, an exchange of glances is all you have. Be sure yours is penetrating.
- In a flash, the soul of the story often shows itself in the last sentence, the revelatory moment. This transformation is the purpose of the flashpoint; once it's accomplished, the story is finished. If your story feels lifeless, rewrite its last words and see if its soul shows up.
- Flash fiction begins at the flashpoint, but the flashpoint doesn't originate in the first sentence; rather, the hottest point in a flash is often the title. There, the story's whole potential is compressed in one phrase, ready to erupt.

- What happens after a flash? What happens after lightning strikes in the distance? Like thunder, the heavy weight of a flash often makes its impact in the silence that follows its flare.
- Do you enjoy writing? That might seem like a superfluous question in a book about writing, but most writers have days when the answer is, “No.” Or even, “NO.” Those are good days to write flash fiction. More importantly, those are good days to revel in the fun of writing flash fiction. Enjoy the instant satisfaction of writing a story in one sitting.
- A flash is quick, but if you unravel it slowly, you’ll notice its layers. Just like the Earth encases a molten center, the layers of a flash build pressure that gives way to a central revelation.
- If your story seems one-dimensional, try replacing emotional descriptors with images. Images are dialectic: they evoke a complete spectrum of emotional content with which the reader interacts. Images allow your reader to experience your story. Emotional descriptors, one other hand, are dictatorial: they prescribe feelings foreign to the reader. The reader might understand, but that’s not enough. You want your reader to live in your flash.

Chapter Five

Flash Fiction Exercises

There are countless ways you can use these flash fiction exercises to inspire new short shorts and improve your writing overall. But as I said previously, I especially hope that if you are just beginning to write flash fiction, you will use this chapter to establish a regular writing practice. There are enough prompts to help you write one story a day for two months or one flash a week for a year. Just like exercising your body improves your well-being over time, writing routinely helps you build new skills and hone the abilities you already have. You'll notice your potential as an author gradually broadening each time you sit down to write.

One of the wonders of flash fiction is that even though it's powerful, it doesn't necessarily demand much time. It commands attentiveness, but only as much as you can give. You can complete these exercises quickly, or you can linger longer if you're inclined.

These prompts are just the beginning. Like seeds given to an unlimited variety of gardeners and planted in a vast world of different environments, these prompts will yield unpredictable fruits. Yours is

sure to be unique, and soon, you'll find your own seeds everywhere you walk. Eventually, life itself will become a writing prompt.

1. Make a "keyhole" by poking a small hole in a piece of cardstock. Look through the hole as if you were looking through the keyhole of a door into a secret room. Write a story in which you only say what you see through the keyhole. Whatever you can't see is only implied.
2. Start the exercise the same way you began the previous prompt, looking through a "keyhole." But this time write about what you can't see and leave whatever's obvious for the reader to fill in.
3. Create a "to do" list on which the last entry is your deepest fear. Write a story in which a character reads through the list as the final entry plays out.
4. Start the exercise the same way you began the previous prompt, but this time write a final entry that expresses your most secret desire. Write a story in which a character reads through the list while the desire plays out in a way the character could never expect.
5. Create a time capsule: a collection of objects that represent the complete history of a character. Now, place that character in a room with those objects and write a story that takes place in a single moment.

6. Place your character at the moment of death, but don't tell your reader—until the end. Write the story that plays out in your character's imagination. What does your character regret or desire?
7. Experiment with creating a short short story from a series of even shorter micros. You can do this on your computer by writing a series of ten fifty-word stories on separate pages. Or, you can limit your space more concretely by writing your fifty words stories on ten small objects: ten leaves, ten napkins, ten stones, ten receipts, ten socks or whatever else you can find. Then, organize your ten fifty-word stories in different ways to create different flashes.
8. One name for flash fiction is "palm-of-the-hand stories." Spend ten minutes writing to the prompt: "If I could hold anything in the palm of my hand, it would be . . ." Then trace your hand on a paper and, using material from the free writing exercise you just completed, write a story that fits in your hand.
9. We might say that flash fiction is "pill-sized." Write a fifty-word story, and then write another story, twice the length, in which your fifty words story is found and "swallowed." Then, write a story twice the length of the second in which your second story is found and digested. Do this at least one more time to create a full-length flash.
10. Think of a moment—a single one—about which you feel deeply. Recall one sight, one smell, one sound, one touch, and one taste from that memory. Rather than writing about your memory, write five one-

hundred-word stories including one of the sensory elements from your memory in each. If the five separate stories are held together by the emotional quality of your memory, try arranging them as a single story told in parts.

11. Take four photographs, new or old, and write a story using one photograph for each “frame” of your piece. Use one photograph to inspire the title, a second photograph for the beginning of the story, a third for the middle, and a fourth for the end.
12. Short short stories are sometimes called “postcard fiction.” Write a fifty-word story on a postcard, and send it to someone who agrees to write their own fifty-word story and send it to you in return. Then, write another fifty-word story in response to your friend’s story. Send stories back and forth until someone quits. See if you can arrange your micro stories into one work of flash fiction.
13. Another name for flash fiction is “pocket-sized stories.” Make a pocket notebook and carry it with you for a week. Record your “flashes:” epiphanies, sudden memories, revelations, obsessions, and momentary cravings. Then, write a story that integrates the fragments of your pocket notes.
14. What was the last thing you found in someone else’s pocket? Write a story in which your character is defined by this hidden object.

15. What was the last thing you lost? Write a story in which this lost object represents your character's innermost desire. Decide whether the object was stolen, lost by accident, or lost on purpose. Is your character actively searching for it, or will someone else find it first?

16. Search for a fable or fairy tale that interests you by browsing online or at your local library. Write a story in which the fable's heroine or hero wakes up in a room that's significant to you, such as your childhood bedroom, a hospital room, or in your first lover's apartment. How does the tale play out differently in this modern setting? What does your character learn in the present that they couldn't have learned earlier?

17. Try sprinting: set a timer for one minute, and during that minute write furiously. Repeat the exercise ten times to create ten flashes. Now, see if you can arrange them into a series.

18. Using the list of flash fiction publishers in the next chapter, browse online journals to find a work of flash fiction you admire. Try to determine what it is about the story that you like. Then, write your own story employing the author's method to accomplish the same aim. You aren't copying; rather, you're allowing an author you admire to teach you about your shared craft.

19. Write a story using a circular structure. Start with an alternating form such as I found _____. I lost _____. I found _____. I lost _____. Or: Inside _____. Outside _____. Inside _____. Outside _____.

_____. When you get to the center of the story, repeat the previous entry. Then, repeat all the entries in reverse order so that the last entry is the same as the first. The idea is to enact a resolution within the story so that the final entry takes on a meaning entirely different than the first.

20. Write a story that gets shorter and shorter. First, compose a flash in two-hundred-and-fifty words. Then, tell that same story in one-hundred words. Then, condense the piece to fifty words, and finally, tell the story in just ten words. You can present the stories as a series or as separate pieces.

21. Every word matters when you're writing a flash. To cultivate this mentality, write a five-word story and then spend five minutes considering each word. Look at its etymology and its relatives in the thesaurus. See how many versions of your original five-word story you can write by exchanging the words with their close cousins. Consider arranging the stories into one flash.

22. Practice moving your story's plot from the external world to the internal world of your character. Write a monologue that unfolds from a single, significant moment. Only relay the details of that moment that reveal the character's central concern. Leave out anything that wouldn't need to be communicated to an intimate friend in a brief, breathless phone call.

23. Without thinking (as far as that's possible) go to a place in your home where you keep miscellaneous things—a junk drawer, jacket pocket, collect-all box, closet, or cabinet—reach your hand in and take out the first thing you touch. Spend ten minutes making a list of words you associate with that item. Don't think—but allow yourself to feel broadly about the object. Write a story in which the object is central, but serves only to reveal the core truth you associate with it.

24. What is the most insignificant object you can think of? Perhaps a speck of ash, a grain of sand, or a paperclip. What happens when that mundane object becomes part of a significant moment? Imagine a speck of ash at a funeral, a grain of sand in a Tibetan mandala, or a paperclip in the president's pocket. Write a story in which an ordinary object becomes extraordinary.

25. Just like in the previous exercise, think of an object that is simple, understated, and apparently unimportant. This time, place the object in a moment that is equally ordinary. Write a story from the perspective of the object.

26. Convert a fifty-word story you've already written into a poem. Don't worry if you've never written a poem before. Simply shape your writing with line breaks and stanzas, and work to find the most impactful words for what you want to say. Now, without changing anything else, remove the line breaks to form a paragraph. Edit your paragraph as needed to create a new flash story.

27. Think of an archetype that appeals to you. If you're unfamiliar with archetypes, you can search online to find one for this exercise, or you can choose from the following: the hero, the mentor, the innocent, the villain, or the everyman. Write a story in which this archetype encounters its opposite.

28. In your character's living room, each different seat is associated with the family member who always sits there. Write a story in which your character is rearranging the furniture—externally. Nothing else happens on the surface, but internally there's a revolution.

29. Gather five random objects. Write a two-hundred-word story in which one of the objects is central to your character's transformation. Now, without changing much else in your story, replace that object with a different object from your collection. Do this with each of the objects you gathered.

30. "Suddenly, _____." Fill in the blank, and then narrate the event from the point of view of five separate characters. Give them each 200 words to tell their version of the story.

31. Write a fifty-word classified ad: "Seeking: Happiness." Without telling the story of the ad's author, imply the writer's history, hopes, and present condition.

32. Choose a satellite image of Earth from The Science Photo Library: <https://www.sciencephoto.com/set/2282/satellite-images-of-earth>.

Looking at the image like an abstract painting, make a list of the first ten words or phrases that come to mind. Then, write a story using the photo as a setting. Incorporate the ten words or phrases you associated with the photo in your story.

33. On Google Images, enter the search term: “microscopic photos of everyday objects.” Choose an image that appeals to you, and then spend five minutes writing everything that comes to mind when you look at the photo. Using your free-writing as a map, write a story in which the object in the photograph is the center point from which your story unfolds.

34. Browse an online art collection, such as the one offered here by The Metropolitan Museum of Art:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection>. Choose a piece of art that interests you and without looking at the title, give the work a name. Use that name as the title for a story and the center out of which the story evolves.

35. Write a ten-word story, and give it a five-word title. Then, title the same story nine other ways. Each title should position the reader with a different perspective and fresh expectations. So, layered in a series, the same ten-word story should read like a new story each time, deepening and expanding with each title.

36. Use the following online resources to browse museums for photos of masks: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

(<https://www.metmuseum.org/connections/masks#/Feature/>),
Smithsonian National Museum of African Art
([https://africa.si.edu/collections/view/objects/asimages/6521?
t:state:flow=b5b5f6da-fa26-4b22-9ab9-fff01c1d9f8d](https://africa.si.edu/collections/view/objects/asimages/6521?t:state:flow=b5b5f6da-fa26-4b22-9ab9-fff01c1d9f8d)) Fasnacht Mask
Museum (<http://maskmuseum.helvetiawv.com/Gallery/Gallery.html>),
or San Miguel Mask Museum
(<http://www.maskmuseumsma.com/photogallery.html>). Find a mask
that represents your opposite. Write a five-hundred-word story in
which you're wearing this mask.

37. Start the exercise the same way you began the previous prompt,
but this time find a mask that represents your core self. Write a story
in which you encounter someone you find disagreeable wearing this
mask.

38. Browse the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery online:
<http://npg.si.edu/portraits>. Find a portrait that reminds you of
someone you love. The resemblance could be physical or abstract,
such an emotional impression or a desire represented by the person.
Write a seven-hundred-and-fifty-word story in which the person in
the portrait is painting you.

39. Start the exercise the same way you began the previous prompt,
but this time choose one portrait that unsettles you, one that seems
familiar, and one that resembles you. Now, imagine that these three
characters meet at a family gathering. Write a six-hundred word story

in which each of these characters has two-hundred words to tell their experience of the get-together.

40. Think of a place you visited but don't want to return. Make a list of three sights, three sounds, three scents, three tastes, and three tactile sensations you don't want to remember from that place. Using those details to create an emotional landscape, write a seven-hundred-and-fifty-word story in which your character returns there.

41. Divide a paper in half. On one side, write the name of a toy you loved when you were a child. On the other side, write the name of a toy you hated. Then spend five minutes on each side noting whatever comes to mind in relation to the names of these childhood toys. Form the fragments of your free writing into a story in which both toys are broken and then rebuilt as a single object.

42. Write a one-hundred-word story, and then read the story to anyone who will listen. The next day, ask that person what they remember from your story. Then, write another one-hundred-word story using only the details your participant recalled after one day. If the same person is willing to participate again, repeat this exercise using your new story. You can also repeat the exercise in a week, a month, or even a year. Or, you can repeat the exercise with several participants and arrange the stories into a series.

43. Here's a smart, simple way to start a flash inspired by the simplest grammatical structure: Someone (noun) is doing something

(verb). Write a five-hundred-word story that begins in the middle of a drama with a character who's already acting. Your first sentence should introduce a character through the character's action. The action implies the character's central concern and sets that concern in motion, making it a story. Try writing in present tense to give the drama a sense of immediacy.

44. Thomas Edison's very first sound recordings were audio "flashes" preserved on tinfoil. Those earliest recordings aren't archived, but for this exercise you can choose one of his later recordings that appeals to you by browsing here:

<https://www.nps.gov/edis/learn/photosmultimedia/the-recording-archives.htm>. Write a character sketch of the recorded sound. If the sound were a person, what kind of person would the sound be? Then, write a story in which that person is listening to the sound.

45. Think of one cliché you often use when speaking as well as one word or phrase you've invented. Write a story in which you use both: use the cliché in an unexpected way so that it's unfamiliar, and use the invented word or phrase as if it's a cliché.

46. Find a photograph from your childhood that predicts an aspect of your life in the present. Write a story set in the present using the picture of your childhood as the central image from which the present circumstances unfold. Focus your story on that singular image.

47. Think of an object you once hid. Write a story in which your character discovers your hidden object in the very first sentence. Spend the rest of the story dealing with the consequences.

48. Take inspiration from miniature makers: crafting something tiny can inspire intricacy we might otherwise never have imagined. And, surprisingly fine detail invites a depth of close examination and delight we might not have known ourselves capable of sustaining. Browse the intricate miniatures in The Museum of Science and Industry's exhibition of Colleen Moore's Fairy Castle: <https://www.msichicago.org/explore/whats-here/exhibits/colleen-moores-fairy-castle/exhibit/kitchen/>. Write a miniature story focusing on intricate, surprising details inspired by the miniature house.

49. Write a five-hundred-word story in three parts: (1) In the beginning, your character is in the midst of a dilemma. (2) Then, your character makes some effort to get free from the dilemma. (3) Finally, your character arrives at a resolution. Now, edit part two so that your character acts in the opposite way, against instinct. How does this change your character in the end?

50. Write a story that begins by falling apart. Start your first sentence with, "It's burning and I'm _____," or, "It's falling and I'm _____," or, "It's melting and I'm _____." Then, let your character tell the history that leads to the present collapse.

51. Think of something intangible you desire deeply but cannot possess. Try to discern the main obstacle to fulfilling your desire, and then imagine an image that corresponds with this obstacle. Write a story that begins and ends with this image, developing the story in such a way that the image takes on a new meaning—something other than obstruction—the second time it's used.

52. Think of the last truly noteworthy occurrence in your life. It doesn't have to be a big event, just something that was meaningful to you. Plot out the scenes surrounding the event: like frames in a comic, write a linear series of one sentence sketches that tell what happened. Now, replace each of those sketches with a single image. Write a story using those images to convey what happened. Avoid telling the reader about the actual event.

53. Think of an object you own that embarrasses you. Spend five minutes writing whatever comes to your mind when you think of this object and if you can, place the object in front of you while you write. Now, find the sentences in your freewriting that you don't want anyone to see. Write a story that builds up to revealing these sentences.

54. Write a story in which two strangers are sitting next to one another—on a bus, on a train, in a coffee shop, on an airplane, on a park bench. One character is writing a list, and the other character, who is telling the story, is secretly watching. Use the list itself to tell

most of the story. Include details about the scene only to convey the emotional response of the narrator.

55. Create a story from your scrap box: gather the material—especially the poignant images—you’ve removed from other stories and find fragments that can be woven into a new flash. If you don’t save your scraps, start today. After you’ve saved your cuttings for a week, come back to this prompt.

56. Write a story in the form of a recipe for a dinner with someone from whom the narrator (recipe author) is keeping a secret. Let the secret slip out in the cooking instructions.

57. Write a story composed only of questions. Then, cross out words in the questions to create answers. For example: ~~How do I~~ write a ~~story~~ only ~~made of~~ questions?

58. Browse the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s online collection of musical instruments:

<https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search#!?department=18&perPage=20&sortBy=Relevance&sortOrder=asc&offset=0&pageSize=0> or arms and armor:

<https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search#!?department=4&offset=0&pageSize=0&sortBy=Relevance&sortOrder=asc&perPage=20>. Choose one object that appeals to you and write a manual instructing a student how to use and not use the item.

59. Browse the Metropolitan Museum of Art's costume institute online: <https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search#!?department=8&offset=0&pageSize=0&sortBy=Relevance&sortOrder=asc&perPage=20>. Choose costume pieces in which to dress your character, and write a story in which this costume stands in for your character's central desire or dilemma. Describe the clothing in detail. Then, allow your character to transform by describing at least one costume change.

60. Take inspiration from a humble blank page. Think of it as a clearing in which anything in the forest can emerge to be seen. Gather five blank sheets of paper—half sheets if you prefer small spaces—and spend five minutes with each sheet letting whatever's in your mind gather there. Then, choose one sheet to create a five-hundred-word story; or, create a five-hundred-word story by collecting one-hundred-word fragments from each sheet. If you want, you can continue this exercise as a daily warm-up, taking five minutes to fill one page each day you sit down to write.

Chapter 6

Publishers of Flash Fiction

You can use this list of sixty publishers of flash fiction to get your short shorts into the hands of readers. As I've mentioned, flash fiction is an especially savvy way to develop your writing by sharing your work with the literary community. You'll be able to experiment with a variety of approaches and receive frequent feedback.

You can also use this list to find flash fiction that you like to read. Reading daily flash fiction will help you generate new work, and it will also give you an idea of how your work fits within the larger literary conversation. To help you get started, I've noted the journals you can read online with an asterisk.

I've also marked journals that exclusively focus on flash fiction and short-form writing with an exclamation point so you can easily find communities of authors, editors, and readers excited about short shorts.

All of these journals read submissions for free. I've noted journals that pay authors using a dollar sign.

Most of these publications don't accept previously published work, but I've noted ones that do. Almost all of them accept simultaneous submissions, except the few I've marked.

* = online journal or print journal with free online content

! = journal dedicated to flash fiction or short form writing

\$ = paying market

1. * Borrowed Solace: an online magazine established in 2017. Created by a group of writers who are also literary enthusiasts, Borrowed Solace publishes artful work that inspires readers to fall in love with language. They publish two issues per year, one themed and one unthemed. They accept submissions year-round online, and authors may submit up to three flashes.

<http://borrowedsolace.com/submission-guidelines/>

2. * formercactus: a monthly online magazine looking for tiny tales that coax us to step from this world into another, invite us to change, and reveal to us the infinite within the infinitesimal. They are looking for weirdos, unexpected connections, and experiments. Authors of flash fiction may submit up to two stories, one-thousand words or fewer each. They accept stories in any genre, but they especially like surrealism, magical realism, and transgressive writing. They accept submissions year-round via email.

<https://formercactus.wordpress.com/submissions/>

3. * Coffin Bell: an online journal of dark literature. They aren't necessarily looking for traditional horror, although they don't rule it out. They want to hear about what scares us today and every day. What do we fear when we're wide awake? They're looking for political nightmares and plebian horrors. They want to be scared afresh, to feel the fear of the moment as it unfolds. Coffin Bell is published quarterly, and they accept submissions year-round online.

<https://coffinbell.com/submit/>.

4. * Dime Show Review: an online and print journal looking for literature that suspends doubt, writing that appears of its own accord and tells secrets we never suspected but always knew. Dime Show Review is published three times a year in print, and online on a rolling basis. They accept submissions online from February first through November first each year. Authors may submit one flash story, one-thousand words or fewer, or up to two, ten-word stories.

<http://www.dimeshowreview.com/submission-guidelines/>

5. * ELJ: A well-established print publication edited by Pushcart Prize winner Kim Chinquee, Elm Leaves Journal has been produced by the students at SUNY Buffalo State College since 1948. ELJ publishes one themed edition annually, and they accept submissions year-round via email. Authors may submit up to five flashes. Archived editions are available to read online. <https://elmleavesjournal.com/submission-guidelines/>.

6. * ! Flash Glass: a monthly online magazine of short-form writing produced by Rowan University's Master of Arts in Writing program, under the umbrella of their larger literary magazine, Glassworks. Flash Glass is named after a glassblowing technique in which the artist creates unique color by layering, rather than simply adding color to a batch. The possible results are infinite, and the effect is that light can shine through the glass, but the glass obscures the vision of anyone who looks through it. Similarly, flash forms of writing allow the essence of truth to shine, while at the same time, they leave much to the imagination. Both the glassblowing technique and the literary art form of flash require deft craftsmanship and keen control. Flash Glass accepts submissions year-round online. Authors may submit up to three flashes, five-hundred words or fewer each. <http://www.rowanglassworks.org/submission-guidelines.html>.

7. * Longleaf Review: an online journal, they take their name and inspiration from Zora Neal Hurston's work gathering the stories of women and men who lived and worked in the longleaf pine forests of Florida in the 1930s. The turpentine camps of the longleaf forests were home to often-overworked and marginalized people who shared portraits of their humanity through stories and songs. Each individual had a story of their own, the heart of which—both glad and sorrowful—we can all find within ourselves. Longleaf Review seeks to showcase such stories—and the fact that we all have them—stories that affirm our humanity and help us to perceive our everyday life as an

inspiration. They accept submissions year-round and publish four issues a year. Authors may submit flashes of three-hundred to one-thousand words and can expect a response within three to six months. <http://longleafreview.com/submissions/>.

8. * Mookychick: eclectic and inclusive, they aim to connect like minds of all varieties. From fashion to faith and everything beyond, upside-down, and in-between—Mookychick wants to know about it. Mookychick is published frequently online, and since two-thousand-and-five they've showcased over six-hundred regular contributors. Authors may submit flashes up to five-hundred words via email, as well as fifty-word stories that are exactly fifty words (not including the title). <https://www.mookychick.co.uk/submission-guidelines>.

9. * Mortar: an online literary magazine seeking of-the-moment flash fiction spoken from the cultural outskirts. They want to broadcast the voices of women, those who identify as gender-nonconforming, those who are non-heteronormative, and all others who identify with the mortar: the often-unnoticed margins around the big brick. They're especially interested in work that articulates marginalized experiences through new or undefined genres and forms—like flash fiction—mortar that constructs our current literary edifice in unexpected ways. Mortar aims to showcase each author's writing with maximum impact, so submitting authors are invited to accompany their submissions with audio or video recordings. And, if authors would like to work with a translator to present their work to a

broader audience, Mortar will pair writers upon request. They're enthusiastic to accept flash fiction of any length, online or via email.

<http://www.mortarmagazine.org/>.

10. * Tilde: a project of Thirty West Publishing House. From its conception in 2015, Thirty West Publishing House has grown into a full-functioning small press. They produce handcrafted chapbooks and broadsides and foster a community for artists. Authors may submit online, up to three flashes of one-thousand words or fewer each.

Current submission deadlines are available on their website.

<https://thirtywest.submittable.com/submit>.

11. * ! The Cincinnati Review (miCRo): in print since 2003, the Cincinnati Review is a highly respected well-established journal. Each week, they publish a selection of micro writing online in a feature called miCRo. Authors may up to three flashes for this digital edition, five-hundred words or fewer, using their online submission manager.

The Cincinnati Review showcases emerging authors, as well as established poets and writers such as Pulitzer Prize winners and Guggenheim and MacArthur fellows. Literature published in The Cincinnati Review has been selected for numerous anthologies, including Best American Short Stories, Best American Fantasy, and Best American Mystery Stories. They accept submissions from September 1 through March 1 each year, and they usually reply within six months.

https://www.cincinnatiareview.com/submission_guidelines/.

12. * \$ The Sunlight Press: an online journal that seeks to showcase experiences that foster epiphanies, stories in which people turn toward hope. They are searching for illustrations of our capacity to navigate the unknown, the dark night, and arrive at our own inner light. Whether born from everyday happenings or an extraordinary event, whether found in the midst laughter, a daily walk, a death, or while witnessing a miraculous work of art, The Sunlight Press wants to hear about your moments of awakening. They publish new content twice a week and accept submissions via email year-round. Authors may submit flashes under one-thousand words. All authors of original work published by the Sunlight Press receive payment for their work. They do not pay for previously published work; however, they do consider it for publication. The Sunlight Press also hosts The Spring Fiction Award, which goes to an author whose work of flash fiction or short story is submitted or published between March the fifteenth and June the fifteenth. The winner is awarded fifty dollars.
<http://www.thesunlightpress.com/submissions/>.

13. * ! \$ 50-Word Stories: an online journal that publishes two fifty-word stories every weekday. They are looking for stories that are exactly fifty words, with all the elements of a traditional story: three-part structure, plot, character development, and theme. They award a ten dollar prize for the best submission each month. They hold a monthly submission period from the first through the fifteenth. Authors may submit one fifty-word story, via email or online, during

that time. They accept previously published work with credit to the original publisher. <http://fiftywordstories.com/submissions/>

14. * ! Ad Hoc Fiction: a weekly flash fiction contest held by the UK's Bath Flash Fiction Award. Each week, authors may submit a one-hundred-and-fifty-word story inspired by the word of the week provided on their website. The story must contain the prompt word. At the end of the week, Ad Hoc Fiction publishes a long list of their favorite stories, and readers vote for a winner. The winners are given one free entry to the Bath Flash Fiction Award contest, where they can submit a flash of three-hundred words or fewer. The winner of the Bath Flash Fiction Award contest, held three times a year, receives one-thousand pounds. Second prize is three-hundred pounds, third prize is one-hundred pounds, and two additional commendable submissions receive thirty pounds each. The creators of Ad Hoc Fiction and the Bath Flash Fiction Award also coordinate the UK's yearly Flash Fiction Festival. <http://adhocfiction.com/submit/>

15. * ! After the Pause: an online quarterly of experimental flash fiction and poetry, with Midwestern roots. They are interested in flash fiction born in the silence that follows pivotal moments. They aim to showcase a diverse range of voices, emerging and established. Authors may submit flashes year-round via email. They accept reprints; however, they favor unpublished work.

<https://afterthepause.com/submission-guidelines/>

16. ! Blink-Ink: a print quarterly of fifty-word stories. Blink-Ink aims to put literature in the modern reader's pocket, as readily available as a smartphone and as quick to read as an email or text message. Authors may submit up to four fifty-word stories via email or by post.

Submitted stories don't need to be exactly fifty words, but they should be close. Submission deadlines and themes vary for each issue, so you can visit their website to find out what they're looking for right now.

<http://www.blink-ink.org/submissions/>

17. * ! Brilliant Flash Fiction: an online quarterly of flash fiction helmed in Ireland since 2014. They are seeking fun, engaging stories told in one-thousand words or fewer. They welcome all genres of fiction, and they accept submissions year-round via email. Authors may submit up to two stories each quarter and can expect a response within three months. Brilliant Flash Fiction is published on the last day of the month in January, March, June, and September.

<https://brilliantflashfictionmag.wordpress.com/submissions/>.

18. * ! CHEAP POP: an online magazine of five-hundred word "micro-fiction that pops." Inspired by Michigan's moniker for soda--pop--CHEAP POP aims to caffeinate readers with short sips of unforgettable fiction. They want stories that fizz but don't fizzle out. They hold two submission periods that correspond with two publishing seasons: submissions received in June are considered for publication in August and September, and submissions received in October and November are considered for publication in January and the following months.

They respond to all submissions after the submission window is closed. Authors may submit one story of five-hundred words or fewer via email each submission period. Since the line between fiction and creative nonfiction is difficult to distinguish, they accept both and everything in-between. <http://www.cheappoplit.com/submit/>

19. * The Collagist: a respected online journal launched in 2009 as a project of Dzanc Books. Work originally published in The Collagist has been selected for prestigious publications such as The Pushcart Prize Anthology, Best of the Net, and Best Small Fictions, among others. The Collagist is published every two months, and they hold two submission periods: from March the first to July the thirty-first, and from October the first to January the thirty-first. Authors may submit up to three flashes of one-thousand words or fewer, no more frequently than twice per reading period, and should wait for a response before submitting again.

<http://thecollagist.com/collagistsubmissions/>

20. * Crack the Spine: an online journal of sharp, well-honed, writing. They're looking for flashes that invite readers to peer into the story a little too forcefully--to crack the spine. They accept submissions year-round, and authors may submit flash fiction of one-thousand words or fewer, as well as micro-fiction of one-hundred-word words or fewer. They publish anything they like regardless of length, so if you have a short short short—like a five-word story, for example—send it their way. <http://www.crackthespine.com/submissions>.

21. * **DIAGRAM**: a respected online journal and a project of New Michigan Press, **DIAGRAM** publishes flash fiction that interacts with the insides of things, or turns things inside-out. They aim to explore the liminal space of representations, of names and labels. Experimental and peculiar, **DIAGRAM** is known for its intriguing aesthetic. Authors may submit flashes of any length, any time, and can expect a response within two months.

<http://thediagram.com/subs.html>.

22. * **! Dream Pop Journal**: an online journal primarily interested in micro and flash fiction. With style akin to that of songwriters such as Liz Fraser and the Cocteau Twins, and the composer Wim Mertens, they like non-narrative writing. They admire artists who transcend formal expectations to create languages all their own. They are looking for hybrid works, collaborative pieces, collages, and all other unusual utterings and literary inventions. **Dream Pop Journal** is published four times a year, in January, April, July, and October. They accept submissions year-round. They are especially interested in featuring work by emerging authors, and they welcome submissions from marginalized voices. Submitting authors can expect a response within about one month. Writers may submit as often as they like but should wait for a response to each submission before submitting again. Authors may submit up to three flashes online, totaling six pages or fewer. <http://www.dreampoppress.net/submit/>

23. *!\$ Every Day Fiction: an online journal of flash fiction that's been publishing new flashes daily since 2007. They are looking for short shorts in any fiction genre, as well as flashes that fall outside genre boundaries. They prefer stories that at least imply a complete plot. They accept submissions year-round online, and authors may submit up to three stories (one per submission) of one-thousand words or fewer each. Authors can expect a response within ninety days and should refrain from sending their submitted work elsewhere during that time since Every Day Fiction doesn't accept simultaneous submissions. Authors published in Every Day Fiction receive a token payment of three dollars per story.

<https://everydayfiction.com/submit-story/>

24. *!\$ Flash Fiction Magazine: an online journal that publishes flash fiction daily. They want stories that include the following elements: three-part structure (a beginning, middle, and end), conflict, and resolution. In other words, stories submitted to Flash Fiction Magazine must have a plot; they are not interested in vignettes, lyrical musings, or slice-of-life flashes without a prominent storyline. Authors may submit one story per month online, three-hundred to one-thousand words. Authors published in Flash Fiction Magazine's daily online journal do not receive compensation; however, authors selected for publication in their anthologies receive forty dollars per story.

<https://flashfictionmagazine.com/submissions/>

25. *!\$ Flash Fiction Online: a respected and highly selective online publisher of flash fiction. Since 2009, they've published new flash fiction monthly. They are looking for flashes with developed characters and complete plots. They accept all genres of fiction including fantasy, slipstream, horror, science fiction, mainstream, literary, humor, and seasonal. They aim to showcase flashes that explore the whole range of human experience, so they publish a wide range of voices. They also offer resources to help flash fiction authors improve their craft. Authors may submit up to three flashes online (one story per submission), five-hundred to one-thousand words, and can expect a response within two days to ten weeks. They accept submissions year-round. Flash Fiction Online pays sixty dollars for each original story they publish. They also accept reprints, for which they pay two cents per word.

<http://flashfictiononline.com/main/submission-guidelines-flash-fiction/>

26. *! Ghost Parachute: launched in 2016, a young online journal of flash fiction seeking brave, uncompromising flashes. They aren't interested in traditional black and white narratives; rather, they want stories daring enough to explore the difficult grey borderlands and the complex, often tough-to-love characters who live there. They accept submissions year-round, and authors may submit one story at a time, 1,000 words or fewer. <http://ghostparachute.com/submissions/>

27. Gigantic Sequins: a well-known print publication regarded for its unusual black and white design and unique aesthetic. Since 2009, they've published two issues per year, one in the spring/summer and one in the fall/winter. They aim to cultivate a diverse literary community, and they showcase a broad range of voices both emerging and established. They like to publish authors who pioneer the literary landscape by exploring unknown possibilities in the creative arts. They hold two submission periods: June the first through August the fifteenth and December the first through February the fifteenth. Authors may submit once per submission period, up to three flashes of one-thousand words or fewer each using their online submission manager. Gigantic Sequins also holds a summer flash fiction contest, and they publish an annual issue of writing by young adult authors (aged thirteen to nineteen) called Teen Sequins.

<http://www.giganticsequins.com/submit.html>

28. * Hobart: a respected online and print journal, always seeking fiction under two-thousand words for online publication. And, they prefer flash fiction, under one-thousand words. Since their debut in 2001, Hobart has gained a reputation for publishing excellent literature. Stories originally published in Hobart have been reprinted in prestigious anthologies such as O'Henry, Best American Nonrequired Reading, Best American Short Stories, and others. They publish both emerging and established authors, and they've debuted many writers who have gone on to gain a wide readership. You can get

a sense of their style by browsing their online publication, where they publish new content daily. Authors may submit one short, two-thousand words or fewer, or up to three short shorts, four-hundred words or fewer. <http://www.hobartpulp.com/submit>

29. *! \$ HOOT: a literary postcard; a micro mag for microforms. Every month, HOOT publishes a literary work of one-hundred-and-fifty words or fewer on a postcard along with an original illustration. The idea is to make literature available--on the fridge; in lunch bags, backpacks, and briefcases--and affordable. Since they want to make their mini magazine as shareable as possible, they're looking for work that's spunky and surprising, not melancholy. If the piece invites an interesting illustration, that's a plus. In addition to the print postcard (which you can also view online), they publish one to four pieces on their website each month. Authors may submit as many micros as they want, but should only send two per submission. HOOT usually responds within one to six months. Although they charge a fee for online submissions, they offer free submissions by post and via email. Authors published on HOOT's print postcard receive payment thirty percent of the money HOOT receives from submissions that month, at least ten dollars. HOOT also offers a free online flash fiction workshop every other Wednesday, as well as a flash fiction pen pal exchange. <http://www.hootreview.com/submissions/>

30. *! Ink in Thirds: an online and print journal of short-form writing published six times per year. They are seeking flashes of three-

hundred words or fewer, and they like three-word stories just as well as their bigger siblings. They publish stories that awaken truth in the author and elicit meaningful emotion from the reader. They consider micro writing in many forms—drabbles, micros, flashes, and prose poems—and don't require narrative elements such as plot. They accept submissions year-round. Authors may submit one story online, three-hundred words or fewer, and can expect a response within a week. Ink in Thirds nominates authors published in the journal for The Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net, and The Best Small Fictions.

<https://inkinthirds.com/submissions/>

31. * ! Jellyfish Review: an online journal helmed in Indonesia publishing two flashes of one-thousand words or fewer each week. They accept all kinds of fiction, but they especially like, "beautiful things with stings." They are looking for wisely-written stories that reveal meaningful insights. Authors may submit a story of one-thousand or fewer via email anytime--they read submissions year-round--and can expect a response within a week.

<https://jellyfishreview.wordpress.com/submissions/>

32. * Juked: a long-running and respected independent journal seeking short shorts. Since 1999, Juked has published literary giants and unknown authors both online and in print. Work originally published in Juked has gone on to appear in prestigious anthologies such as New Sudden Fiction, Sudden Fiction International, Best of the Web, and others. They publish new content regularly online and

release a print edition once a year. They accept submissions year-round, and authors may submit three to five flashes online. They only accept short shorts for their online journal; submissions for their print edition must be at least two-thousand-five-hundred words.

Submitting authors can expect a response within four months.

<http://juked.com/info/submit.asp>

33. * \$ The Knicknackery: an online journal of little oddities seeking flashes of one-thousand, five-hundred words or fewer. They like all good stories, but they have a soft spot for misfits—a little weird and misunderstood--and experiments that defy boundaries only to end up sequestered at the back of the closet. They accept all genres of fiction and appreciate receiving foreign language submissions accompanied by English translations. Since 2014, the Knicknackery has published three issues a year. Current submission openings are indicated on their website. Authors may submit one story online, one-thousand-five-hundred words or fewer, and can expect a response within three months. The Knicknackery offers a token payment to all authors they publish. <http://theknicknackery.com/submission-guidelines/>

34. * Maudlin House: a monthly online journal of transgressive, absurdist, and minimalist literature that's always accepting flashes of five-hundred words or fewer. Maudlin House was created by writers, for writers, and they are devoted to publishing both emerging and established voices. They invite authors to challenge familiar definitions of literature and craft something totally weird. Authors

may submit up to three flashes online, five-hundred words or fewer each. Maudlin House usually responds to submissions within four weeks. <https://maudlinhouse.net/submissions/>

35. *! Microfiction Monday Magazine: an online journal publishing flashes of one-hundred-word or fewer on the first Monday of every month since 2011. They accept all genres of fiction and publish pieces on a wide variety of themes. They are looking for complete stories that make a big impact in a small space. They want stories with a plot, and they prefer flashes that aren't overly abstract. They don't usually publish stories shorter than fifty words or longer than one-hundred words. Authors may submit stories online and can expect a response within six weeks. They allow multiple submissions, and they accept submissions year-round. Microfiction Monday Magazine receives about fifty to one-hundred submissions per month, and they choose about five to ten flashes from each batch for publication. <https://microfictionmondaymagazine.com/submissions/>

36. Mid-American Review: a long-running and highly respected print journal seeking flash fiction. Published twice yearly since 1972, Mid-American Review is dedicated to publishing expertly-honed, moving fiction. They like work that focuses on language and character but doesn't sacrifice narrative. Mid American Review is committed to fostering a literary community that supports both emerging and established authors and nurtures collective growth. They accept submissions year-round, and authors may submit up to five flashes

online. They accept both traditional and experimental work but prefer not to receive genre fiction.

<http://casit.bgsu.edu/midamericanreview/submit/>

37. * ! The Molotov Cocktail: an online and print journal of risky flash fiction--ready to explode. Published twice monthly, The Molotov Cocktail is always seeking unsafe flashes of one-thousand words or fewer. Although they welcome literary fiction, they like stories that aren't too upright: think crooked characters, fast action, and exposed guts. They favor experimental and surrealist fiction, but they also accept some types of genre work, excluding romance, children's literature, young adult literature, and fantasy focused on swords and sorcerers. Authors may submit one story online. Although they accept flashes up to one-thousand words, most pieces published in The Molotov Cocktail range between three-hundred and six-hundred words. <https://themolotovcocktail.com/submission-guidelines/>.

38. * ! \$ Nanoism: an online "twitterzine" of tweet-length fiction publishing weekly micros of one-hundred-and-forty characters or fewer. Nanoism aims to send a little sunlight into the chinks of the modern reader's day with tiny stories that can be read in a flash on a smartphone. They accept all genres of fiction, but they prefer literary stories that stick with readers, nanos that push beyond the borders of their small size with big ideas. They accept submissions year-round, and authors may submit one story per week via email. There's no need to title micros submitted to Nanoism; they don't publish titles.

Nanoism also accepts serialized twitfic: three to seven nanos, each of one-hundred-and-forty character or fewer. Each nano in the series should function as a standalone story that also contributes to the larger narrative of the serial piece. Authors can expect a response within a week. Nanoism offers token payment for all micros published in their zine: one-dollar and fifty cents per story and five dollars per serial piece. They welcome previously published work--especially tweets. <http://nanoism.net/submit/>

39. * ! Paper Darts: an online and print platform for flashes that push boundaries, challenge beliefs, and showcase underrepresented perspectives. They pair unexpected flashes from unheard voices with custom artwork and sometimes dabble like artistic outlaws in deviant endeavors like pop-up shops, art museums, readings, short story collections, vinyl records, and other such obsessions. They accept submissions year-round, and authors may submit stories of one-thousand words or fewer online. They consider all submissions for both their online and print editions.

<http://www.paperdarts.org/submit/>

40. * ! Pidgeonholes: an online journal of weird flashes with a special submission category for unpublished voices. They are looking for stories of one-thousand words or fewer, including micro and nanofoms such as drabbles and fifty-word stories. They like all forms of strange, beautiful fiction: literary, speculative, experimental, and unclassified. They accept submissions year-round online. Authors may

submit any number of flashes, totaling one-thousand words or fewer. Each month, they offer twenty-five never-before-published writers special consideration through a separate submission category just for unpublished authors. Authors who submit flashes in this category receive constructive feedback from the editors at Pidgeonhole, who hope to publish new writers while helping them hone their craft. All authors can expect a response within one month.

<http://www.pidgeonholes.com/submit/>

41. * ! RHINO: a respected, award-winning print journal of poetry, flash fiction, and translations. They are seeking both traditional and experimental flashes that demonstrate stylistic conviction and passion for language. On the border between academia and the cutting-edge of the emerging poetry scene, they publish both new and established voices. Submissions are read by multiple editors with a variety of literary tastes, so the journal includes a wide range of aesthetics. Since nineteen-seventy-six, RHINO has been published annually in print, and now they also publish work from the print journal online throughout the year. They accept general submissions from April the first through to July the thirty-first each year. Authors may submit one flash of five-hundred words or fewer online.

<https://rhinopoetry.org/general-submissions/>

42. * ! \$ SmokeLong Quarterly: a respected online journal established in 2003 dedicated exclusively to flash fiction. They take their name from the Chinese moniker for flash fiction--smokelong story--a tale

that can be read in the time it takes to smoke a cigarette. They are looking for uncommon flashes that employ surprising language, purposeful fiction arising from urgent honesty. They accept submissions year-round for their quarterly publication, and authors may submit one story of one-thousand words or fewer online. They usually respond to submissions within six weeks. They don't accept work previously published in online journals; however, they do consider work published on personal blogs. They pay twenty-five dollars per story upon publication.

<http://www.smokelong.com/submissions/guidelines/>

43. *! Star 82 Review (*82): established in 2012, a quarterly print and online journal of little literary gems: flashes, erasures, narrative art, postcard stories, and poetic tales. They take their name from the code used to unblock one's phone number, to open the lines of communication. Their aesthetic is both soft and striking. They like work that's (at least a little) hopeful, humble, humorous, and human. Authors may submit any number of flashes totaling one-thousand words or fewer once a month online. Though they accept flashes up to one-thousand words, they prefer stories under seven-hundred-and-fifty words, and they are most likely to publish stories between one-hundred-word and five-hundred words. They respond to most submissions within ten days, and they publish about eight to ten percent of the work they receive.

<http://star82review.com/submissions.html>

44. * \$ The Sun: established in 1974, a respected, reader-supported, print and online journal of personal and political literature. With over seventy-thousand readers, The Sun reaches a wide audience. Work originally published in The Sun has gone on to win The Pushcart Prize and has appeared in prestigious anthologies such as Best American Short Stories. They pay three hundred to two-thousand dollars per story. Authors may submit flashes of any length online or via post. They are especially interested in receiving work from authors of color. They discourage simultaneous submissions.

<https://www.thesunmagazine.org/submit>

45. * ! Threadcount: an online journal of short-form hybrid literature seeking textural, experimental flashes. They want work that weaves layer upon layer in a small, dense, textile-like space. Since 2013 they've published two issues per year, each with work from around five contributors. They accept submissions year-round via email. Authors may submit up to five hybrid form flashes, one-thousand words or fewer each. <https://threadcountmag.com/submissions/>

46. * Tin House Online: a highly-regarded daily online magazine, a project of the well-known print journal of the same name. In the months that Tin House's print journal is themed--from March through May and from September through November--Tin House Online will frequently publish work on that same theme. Authors may submit stories of one-thousand words or fewer for publication in their "Flash Fridays" feature. Tin House Online accepts submissions year-round

via their online submission manager, and they usually respond within three months. <https://tinhouseonline.submittable.com/submit>

47. * ! Whale Road Review: an online journal of short-form writing. They're looking for transformative flashes that give readers new eyes for old narratives. Offering literature that fits into the brief pauses of everyday life, Whale Road Review hopes to reach a broad audience. Their online platform also provides resources for writing teachers as well as reviews of flash fiction and other short-form literature. They publish new flash fiction in their fall and winter editions, and they accept submissions in June and December. Authors may submit up to three flashes via email, five-hundred words or fewer each.

<http://www.whaleroadreview.com/submission-guidelines/>

48. * Front Porch Journal: an online journal published by the MFA students of Texas State University, seeking both traditional and experimental flashes to showcase online between full-length editions. They prefer stories with meaningful development over snapshots or sketches. They accept submissions year-round, but only read submissions during the following months: January, February, May, June, September, and October. Authors may submit one flash online, 600 words or fewer, and can expect a response within three to four months. <http://frontporchjournal.com/submissions/>

49. * Gravel: an online journal published by The University of Arkansas at Monticello, seeking flashes of one-thousand words or

fewer. They publish an eclectic array of forms and styles, including hybrid work and pieces that can't be classified. They're interested in showcasing the best creative talent, and they're always looking for new voices. Authors may submit up to two flashes using Gravel's online submission manager. <https://gravel.submittable.com/submit>

50. * Green Hills Literary Lantern: previously a well-established print journal, this newly-digitized literary annual published by Truman State University is seeking impactful short shorts. A partner journal of highly-regarded publications such as The Missouri Review, River Styx, Boulevard, New Letters, Poetry Pacific, and Natural Bridge, Green Hills Literary Lantern is a respected publication. They accept submissions year-round and publish both emerging and established writers.

Authors may submit two to three short shorts via email or by post and can expect a response within three to four months. A new issue of Green Hills Literary Lantern is published online each July.

<http://ghll.truman.edu/submissions.html>

51. ! Inch: a literary print quarterly of condensed writing published by Bull City Press. Printed in a palm-sized, eight-page volume, Inch invites readers to marvel at the wonder of big stories compressed in a small space. They've published giants like Betty Adcock, Roxanne Gay, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, and Danielle Wallace, but they're always looking for unheard voices too. Authors may submit up to three stories of seven-hundred-and-fifty-words or fewer online.

<https://bullcitypress.com/inch/inch-submissions/>

52. * Menacing Hedge: an online quarterly of experimental and up-and-coming literature. They're looking for uncompromising, surprising, visceral flashes with a bit of a dark tint. They like horror, slipstream, magical realism, and science fiction, and their aesthetic tends toward dark humor, absurdism, surrealism, and other forms of bizzaro and quirky lit. Each flash published on Menacing Hedge is paired with an audio recording. Authors may submit flashes up to one-thousand words online and can expect a response within two months. <http://www.menacinghedge.com/spring2018/submit.php>

53. * ! Meow Meow Pow Pow: an online press publishing short-form literature on printable broadsides. Launched by a group of graffiti lovers and cat admirers, Meow Meow Pow Pow hopes to wheatpaste the world with micro lit. They want their free, shareable broadsides to give a microphone to unheard voices. They're looking for small, surprising stories with big, wide-open ideas. Flashes submitted to Meow Meow Pow Pow should respond to their quarterly theme, found on their website. They accept submissions all the time and publish one new broadside each week. Authors may submit one flash of one-hundred-and-fifty to three-hundred words online. <https://www.meowmeowpowpowlit.com/submission-guidelines.html>.

54. * ! Akashic Books Flash Fiction Series: from Brooklyn's award-winning independent publisher, a variety of themed online flash fiction publications: Fri SciFi (science fiction published on Fridays),

Sports & Justice, Duppy Thursday (stories that include folklore, set in the Caribbean), Mondays are Murder (place-based noir), and Terrible Twosdays (stories about parenting). Authors may submit flashes of seven-hundred-and-fifty words or fewer. Please visit their submission page for category-specific guidelines.

<http://www.akashicbooks.com/submissions/>

55. * Neon: one of the longest running independent lit mags in the UK. They're seeking flash fiction from the dark side with speculative or surrealist elements. They like horror, science fiction, and magical realism with strong literary roots. They publish around forty authors a year in three editions, distributed both in print and online. Every other issue of Neon is themed, and authors can find current themes in their submission guidelines. They accept flashes of any length via email, and they also accept reprints. Authors can check their website for current submission openings.

<http://neonmagazine.co.uk/guidelines/>

56. * \$ The Offing: an online journal of limit-testing literature seeking provocative, experimental flashes. They want to offer a platform for brave new voices to speak boldly, and for established authors to dare themselves to write something totally unexpected. Besides accepting flash fiction of any length (including very short micros), they also accept short shorts in the following categories: Back of the Envelope (science and nature writing), Enumerate (lists), Wit Tea (humor), and Here/You Are (place-based writing). Authors may submit online and

can expect a response within two months. The Offing pays \$20 to \$60 for each published piece, and they actively publish marginalized voices. Authors can check their website for current submission openings. <https://theoffingmag.submittable.com/submit>

57. * ! Palm Sized Press Prompts: an independent online community for flash fiction authors based in the UK. Each month, they post a new flash fiction prompt and ask authors to respond via email in five-hundred words or fewer. All submissions are posted on their website, and both authors and readers are encouraged to respond. <https://palmsizedprompts.wordpress.com/submissions/>

58. * Sundog Lit: an online quarterly of raging writing. Sundog is looking for flashes born in the ashes of burnt-down factories and run-of-the-mill days. Authors may submit up to three flashes, seven-hundred-and-fifty words or fewer each, using Sundog Lit's online submission manager. They also accept themed short-form writing for their blog. Please see their submission guidelines for their current quarterly theme. Sundog Lit actively publishes marginalized voices. <https://sundoglit.com/submissions/>

59. * Alluvian: an online journal exploring humanity's relationship to the natural world, seeking flashes related to climate change, sustainability, and environmental science. They accept general submissions year-round, as well as themed submissions on occasion. Authors can check their submission page for current themes. Authors

may submit flashes of at least three-hundred-and-fifty words using Alluvian's online submission manager.

<https://alluvian.submittable.com/submit>

60. * Whistling Shade: a twice-yearly print and online journal distributed to libraries, cafes, and bookstores around St. Paul, Minnesota. Since 2001, they've distributed about two-thousand-five-hundred copies each year. They prefer mainstream, literary flashes. Authors may submit up to three flashes of one-thousand words or fewer each via email, and can expect a response within three months. They accept submissions year-round.

<http://www.whistlingshade.com/submissions.html>

Conclusion

As you write and submit flash fiction for publication, you'll witness your craft evolving with each prompt you undertake and each note of feedback you receive. And, since short short exercises are, well, short, you'll find your authorial-self changing fast. I hope that as you grow and develop, you'll revisit prompts you've already explored. You might be surprised to find an entirely new, unexpected flash within an old, familiar prompt.

The same holds true for journals to which you've submitted your work. I hope you'll go back to these magazines as you hone your craft and submit new flashes. If a journal you like rejects your first submission, try studying their flashes to see what you can learn from the authors they publish. Then, write new work and submit again. I hope you'll also take time to reread flashes you especially admire or dislike. This will help you color your aesthetic with more and more nuanced shades over time.

But most importantly, I hope that as you live with flash fiction, you experience (at least for a few minutes a day) the joy of inhabiting the uncommon space it creates: the endless transition, the beginningless start of constant beginnings.

About the Author

Ananda-mayi Dasi lives and works as a nun in the Hindu tradition of Gaudiya Vaisnavism, and she spends most of her time writing, cooking, and tending the temple at Madhuvan, an ashram in the jungles of Costa Rica. She holds an MFA in poetry from Sarah Lawrence College, and her writing has been published internationally in a number of journals. She's also a columnist at Ruminare, and right now, she's working in collaboration with award-winning graphic novelists Kaisa and Christoffer Leka on an illustrated book about her spiritual tradition titled, *What is Bhakti-Yoga?: 108 Questions and Answers*. She's also an editor and professional submissions consultant. You can contact her at anandamayipoetry@gmail.com