

# *A Day in the Life of a Writer* *Writing Contests*

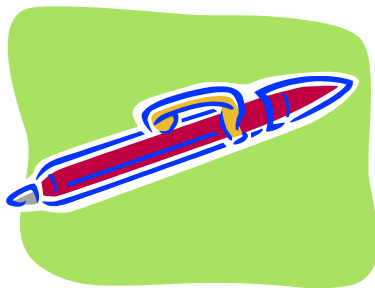
*By Tami Brothers*

*May/June 2008*

Contests. The fear of entering them is almost as high as the fear of submitting to an agent or editor. Why is this?

For some, the fear is putting a piece of their soul out into the world. For others, the fear is getting a bad critique. Still, a few fear that next step in the writing process. Are these reasons good enough to keep a person from entering a contest? I say no. Contests hold numerous opportunities for unpublished writers and can be a great first step on the road to publication.

There are writers who write completely for themselves and have no desire to become published. They want only to put their thoughts down on paper or even as a memoir for their children. That's a great idea, but the majority of us are writing with the eventual goal of becoming published.



If you're just starting out in this foreign world, one of the simplest ways to get some type of feedback is to enter a writing contest. Choosing a contest to meet your needs is the key. Do you want a detailed critique? Are you searching for a chance to get your work in front of a specific agent or editor? Is a contest win the icing on the cake for your query letter?

Contests mean different things to different people and writers need to know what they are getting into before they send in their pages and fee. Writer's magazines are one of the best places to begin your search. In RWA's *Romance Writers Report*, a plethora of choices are listed each month. Along with the details of the fee, page count and judges, you are usually given a Web site to go to for more information on that specific contest and the chapter sponsoring it. There you can see if they offer scores only or full critiques.

Another place to find out about contests is through various writing loops. Writers quite often comment on different contests and their experience with them. You can even find references to contest wins or finals in some signature lines of people commenting. If you want more information than what you see in the everyday posts, ask a question about contests on the loops and you'll be overwhelmed with responses.

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Article first appeared in *The Galley* 05/08, a publication of Georgia Romance Writers.

I found some of the contests I've entered when I was the author of GRW's *Members' Doings* column. What better place is there to find out about contests than from your friends? I know these people and how serious they take their writing. Each time someone let me know about a contest win or final, I had to look up the contest to make sure I had the spelling correct, to see if each particular contest might be right for me. Authoring this article was a great opportunity for me to get my name out into the public, as well as finding some really good contests. (Notice the plug for volunteering in your local writing chapter here...)

I've only listed a few places in this article where you can find out about writing contests, but there are tons of different places out there. It just takes a little time and effort on the writer's part to search for the one that's right for you. For more information on reasons why you should enter contests and how many are too many, find an April 2007 copy of the *Romance Writers Report* and check out Ruth Kaufman's article titled, *Contests: Let You be the Judge*. Ms. Kaufman gives some really good insight into getting more out of contests and even lists some concerns you should consider before you enter.

If you're riding the fence on whether or not to enter a contest, consider the idea that this is a small investment into your future. Think of it as a baby step on your road to publication. As for hurdling that fear, your strength and resolve to get published is what will help you get past it. I have faith in you. Best of luck to you all and happy writing!

***Tami Brothers*** is the current GRW PRO-Liaison 07/08 and 2008 Registrar for GRW's Moonlight & Magnolias Writers Conference. She writes sexy contemporary romance with the hope of one day becoming published. Check out her Web site at [www.tamibrothers.com](http://www.tamibrothers.com).

