

Romance Writers of Australia Inc
is proud to announce...



The Sapphire Award 2021

- Opening date:** 5 pm Sydney time, 14 September 2020.
- Closing date:** 5 pm Sydney time, 5 October 2020.
- Eligibility:** RWAust members in Emerging and Established membership categories, who have at least one work of fiction (10K+) commercially available/contracted. The *entry* must not be commercially available/contracted for publication
- Entry fee:** AU\$44.00 per entry (Australian entries – GST incl.)
- Judging:** Preliminary judging is in two rounds, by reader judges.
Final round judge: TBA
- Entry specifications:** **First 10,000 words** (maximum) of your 'unpublished' (i.e. not commercially available or contracted) 10K+ romance or romantic elements manuscript. Use exact computer word count.
2nd and final rounds will require the full manuscript.
- No. of entries:** Maximum of TWO entries per person
- How to enter:** Go to the link on the RWA website to pay and fill in your online entry form: <http://romanceaustralia.com/contests-overview/the-sapphire/>
- Queries:** Contest Coordinator: Jacinta Peachey
sapphire@romanceaustralia.com

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENTRANTS:

Entries:

Entry is a two-step process:

Please complete your **contest registration and payment via the online entry button**. You will then be taken to the online form to provide the details of your entry, and upload your file/s. No postal entries are accepted.

Each entry should comprise the following:

Entry: one file in .doc format (not .docx) with the manuscript title in the filename. Include your title page, then the manuscript, as follows:

- **Title page**, including the following: manuscript title, subgenre/targeted line, projected word count of full manuscript
- **Manuscript**, beginning on a new page; the **first** 10,000 words (maximum) of your manuscript.

Word counts are exact. Use computer count. Any extra words will be trimmed, so ensure your entry does not exceed 10,000 words.

Once your entry/payment is completed, you will receive an automatic acknowledgement email. If you do not receive this within 24 hours of submitting your entry, please email the contest coordinator at sapphire@romanceaustralia.com to check that your entry has been received. Your coordinator is a volunteer, so response times may be variable.

The coordinator will also contact you if there are any problems with your manuscript formatting.

The contest coordinator is here to help you.

There are no stupid questions.

If you are unsure of anything, contact sapphire@romanceaustralia.com BEFORE you submit

Download a formatting sample and example scoresheet: <https://romanceaustralia.com/contests-overview/the-sapphire/>

Formatting your manuscript:

FOR ALL ROUNDS:

- Page is A4 size, portrait orientation
- Include a title page containing **manuscript title; sub-genre** (e.g. Regency, Sci-fi with romantic elements, paranormal, rural romance etc.) **or targeted line** if applicable (for category romance, e.g. Harlequin Desire, Sexy, etc.); and **projected word count** of completed manuscript
- Text for manuscript begins on a new page, approx. one-third of the way down, and is double-spaced, with no blank lines or extra spacing between paragraphs; the first line of each paragraph is indented 1 cm
- Margins set to 2.5 cm all around
- All text is aligned left (not fully justified)
- All text is 12-pt Courier New or Times New Roman font
- Begin each new chapter approx. one-third of the way down a new page
- Include a document header, containing:
 - a. Page number in upper right corner. Start page numbers at page 1 on the manuscript (don't number your title page)
 - b. Manuscript title
 - c. Targeted line/sub-genre as applicablee.g. The Hot Greek Billionaire/Harlequin Desire
A Wild Romance/Regency
Sexy Space Pirates/Sci-fi with romantic elements

This information is to enable us properly to allocate your entry to judges. **Do not include your name anywhere on the entry.**

To ensure fairness to all entrants, and consistency and ease for judges, **all of the above formatting conditions are compulsory.**

If any condition is not met: at the contest coordinator's discretion, the entrant will be given reasonable opportunity to fix any formatting issues and resubmit a correctly formatted entry before the closing date/time. If your entry is not received with correct formatting by that time, it will be entered in the contest, but a 5-mark deduction (total, not per error) will be made from your score, and your entry will be ranked below equivalently-scored entries that do not have formatting errors. This will disadvantage you if there is a tie for a finalist placing.

The purpose of this system is to teach entrants the proper formatting – so you're encouraged to submit your entries in advance of the closing date, to ensure you have time to correct any errors.

If in doubt about how to achieve any of the formatting, please ask the contest coordinator for advice. Check your entry against the formatting sample on the website and ask yourself: *does my entry look like this?* If the answer is no, then ask for help.

ENTRY CONDITIONS

RWA Inc. reserves the right to disqualify entries that do not comply with the entry conditions. The contest coordinator's decision in this regard is final.

1. The Sapphire Award is for a partial manuscript (in the 1st round) and full manuscript (in the 2nd and final rounds) from a romance or romantic elements novel or novella (10K+) that is not commercially available or contracted for publication. Only RWA members in the Emerging and Established categories who have at least one novel or novella (10K+) commercially available or contracted are eligible to enter. This is not a contest for 'unpublished' writers. Your entry must not be commercially available or contracted. Romance Writers of Australia Member Classifications are detailed on the RWA website: <http://romanceaustralia.com/join-rwa/>
2. For the purposes of this contest, RWA deems 'commercially available' to mean: any work of fiction (*or part of*) that is (*or has been at any time*) available for purchase or download in any format for any price including free:
 - a. in any marketplace where books are available (*this shall include physical or digital bookstores, a publisher's website or store, and any other retailer or distribution outlet for books in any format*);
 - b. at any other venue where the work includes (*or is followed by*) links to non-free content, or otherwise appears with the intent of selling or encouraging purchase of any of the author's works (*this shall include story-sharing or file-sharing sites, blogs, social media sites and other author websites.*)
3. The projected word length of the completed manuscript from which your entry is taken must be 10,000 words or over (novella or novel-length) for your entry to be eligible. Entries from a manuscript that has won a previous Valerie Parv, Emma Darcy or Sapphire Award are not eligible.
4. All entrants must be financial members of RWA. If membership lapses at any time during the judging process, the entry will be removed from the contest.
5. Members are not allowed to judge for contests they have entered. Contest Coordinators may not enter or judge a contest they are managing, but may enter or judge for another contest.
6. If after submitting his/her entry, the entrant accepts an offer of publication for the entry, or makes the entry commercially available, during the contest period (from submission of entry to the public announcement of round 3), the entry is no longer eligible to go forward in the contest, and the entrant must contact the contest manager to arrange for the entry to be withdrawn. If finalists have already been announced when the entrant accepts the offer of publication or makes a work commercially available, no withdrawal is required, finalist placings will stand, and the entry remains eligible to win prizes.
7. The definition of 'romance' implies the romantic development of a relationship between the protagonists, and includes all romantic novel and novella markets, heat levels and sub-genres, i.e. category and single title romance, contemporary, historical, Regency, futuristic, fantasy, paranormal, time travel, romantic suspense, erotic romance, chick lit, young adult, new adult, LGBTQI+, rural/outback, inspirational, science fiction. Entries from novels/novellas with romantic elements (where romantic development between the protagonists is a subplot) are also eligible. Judges will judge your entry based on the information you give, so **contact the contest coordinator in advance if you are unsure of the correct sub-genre**. If your entry includes explicit sex, mark the applicable box/es on the entry form. This is merely to help us allocate your entry to judges familiar with those elements.
8. The Sapphire is held in 3 rounds. The 1st round is the first 10,000 words of a romance or romantic elements novel/novella, as detailed in items 1–7 above. The 2nd and 3rd rounds are for the full manuscript of the same novel/novella (minor revisions/changes from the first round entry are permitted), which must be emailed to the contest coordinator within 5 working days of the public announcement of placement in each round. Any entries received after this time will not be allowed to go through into that round.
9. The top 15 entries in the first round will progress to the second round, and the top 3 entries in the second round shall be the finalists, with the proviso that an entry must score 85% or higher in a round to be eligible to advance to the next round, or to be eligible for a prize or placing. Ties for 2nd round or finalist placings can be resolved by highest total X-factor score. If, by the closing date, insufficient 1st round entries are received to make running the contest feasible, RWA reserves the right to cancel the contest and refund the entry fees.
10. The entrant must be the original author of every entry they submit. Entries by joint authors are permitted. Fan fiction (stories using characters, settings, worlds or other elements which belong to someone else) is not eligible. Entries must be text only, no images.
11. RWA reserves the right, at any time during the contest, to reject entries that in the contest coordinator's opinion contain any of the following presented in a positive light or as titillation: rape, pedophilia, incest, or any other conduct that is degrading or promotes hate.
12. Up to two (2) entries per person are permitted. Copyright in the manuscript remains with the entrant.
13. Entry fees are non-refundable once your entry is accepted. Credit card payment only, via the online system.

14. Reading by an editor does not imply acceptance into a publisher's selection/editing process. Judges' decisions and scores are final. No correspondence will be entered into. If you have suggestions on the contest process, advise the coordinator by separate email.
15. Thank you notes to judges are welcome. Please email any 'thank you's' to the contest coordinator, including the judge numbers, and they will be forwarded. No gifts, please.

ENTRY AND FORMATTING

16. Online entries only (no snail mail). Fill in your entry form and pay your entry fee online.
17. Your **first round entry** includes the **first** 10,000 words (maximum) of your romance or romantic elements manuscript. Word count is exact and any words exceeding the limit will be trimmed. Entries can be shorter than these counts, but bear in mind that judges are scoring for character and plot development (see sample scoresheet on the website for details). Entries for round 2 and 3 will be the full manuscript of the round 1 entry. All entries to be saved in .doc format (not .docx).
18. The **title page must include**: manuscript title, sub-genre/targeted line (e.g. Regency, paranormal romance, contemporary with romantic elements, Harlequin Desire, Entangled Blush) and projected word count of completed manuscript. The **header must include**: manuscript title, sub-genre/targeted line, and page number, starting at page 1 on the manuscript (don't number the title page). **Author's name must not appear on entries.** RWA contests strive to preserve anonymity between judges and entrants.
19. **Formatting for all rounds**: A4 page, portrait orientation. Font: 12 pt Courier New or Times New Roman. 2.5 cm margins all round. Text is aligned left (not fully justified), and is double-spaced, with no blank lines between paragraphs, and the first line of each paragraph is indented 1 cm. Begin each chapter approx. one-third of the way down a new page. Remember, this is an email contest, and entries will not be printed. Formatting will be assessed on having your margins, indents etc. set to the specified sizes, not by the appearance of your manuscript on a printed page.
20. To ensure fairness to all entrants, and consistency and ease for judges, **all the above formatting conditions are compulsory**. If any condition is not met, and time allows, you will be given the opportunity to fix the problem and submit a correctly formatted entry before the closing date/time. If your entry is not received with correct formatting by that time, it will be entered in the contest, but a 5-mark deduction (total, not per error) will be made from your raw score, and your entry will be ranked below equivalently-scored entries that do not have formatting errors. The purpose of this system is to teach entrants the proper formatting, so you are encouraged to submit your entries well in advance of the closing date, to ensure you have time to correct any errors.

Tips from the contest coordinators:

- A sample scoresheet is available from the contest website: <https://romanceaustralia.com/contests-overview/the-sapphire/>. Check it out to see what the judges will be looking for—perhaps there are some improvements you can make before entering.
- Run a spell-checker over your entry—but then ask a friend to read it, too, to check for any typos or errors you've missed. Judges tend to look favourably on an entry that is free from errors.

Tips on formatting your entry:

- Download the formatting sample form the contest website to see what your entry should look like, and for more hints: <https://romanceaustralia.com/contests-overview/the-sapphire/>
- Make sure your first round entry doesn't exceed 10,000 words. We use computer count. To ensure fairness to all entrants, we can't accept even one word over.
- It's best not to hit 'Enter' multiple times to start a new page. Some judges read on e-readers, and multiple returns will not appear. If you want to start a new page, use 'Insert' > 'Page Break'.
- MS Word sometimes has a default setting that inserts unwanted space between paragraphs. Click 'Format > Paragraph' and make sure 'Spacing: Before' and 'Spacing: After' are set to zero.
- To make the page numbers start at 1 on the manuscript, and not on your title page: have the page numbers start at zero, and then untick 'Show number on first page'.
- Finally: *please* don't spend hours stressing over the formatting. The rules are simple and easy to achieve—if in doubt, ask for help.