



Guidelines for Writers' Guild members writing online drama or other online content

Introduction:

The Writers' Guild is aware that its members are increasingly being commissioned to write online drama and other literary content for 'new' or 'non-traditional' media, particularly as part of initiatives like the BBC's 'Multi-platform Commissioning' drive. This content may be developed to compliment existing radio or television programming or as standalone new media content. It can be almost anything ranging from fixed diary entries, interactive blogs, daily character blogs, biographies, single voice 'vox pops', audio diaries, in-vision blogs, online games and a myriad of other types of short-form audio, audio-visual or literary content intended as existing programme support material or as standalone on-line only propositions.

We hope that these guidelines will give members some idea of how they might be approached, contracted and paid for this kind of work. As with all our rates, these are minimums and members may be able to negotiate upwards of these.

As with any commission, the writer is at liberty to accept the fee and terms offered, or not. If you are a Guild member and you need further advice as to a particular commission or deal you are offered, please contact the Guild office.

Suggested minimum rates:

We would recommend that writers of online drama or other content be contracted and paid in one (or a combination) of three ways:

1. Payment according to the Guild's Minimum Terms Agreements

Where possible, members should be contracted according to our MTAs for TV or Radio drama. The Guild supports and believes in 'platform neutrality' so that if you write a piece of drama for television or radio, and it can be clearly recognised as such, you should be paid the same by the time it is broadcast on television or radio, regardless of where or how it was first made available.

The BBC is actively developing content for online and new media and is working

closely with us in establishing the means for best practice contracting. The BBC's current informal approach, based on the incremental multi-platform proposition, is to offer the greater of the prevailing minimum Writers' Guild fees or an up to 50% reduction on the writer's current television or radio rate, as applicable, for on-line use only.

Our per minute TV rates could be used as the base rate for a piece of online audiovisual drama, for example, so an established TV writer might expect £166.47 per minute.

Our per minute Radio rates could be used as the base rate for a piece of online audio only drama, for example, so an established Radio writer might expect £50.01 per minute.

Please note: the package of rights acquired by the fee in such circumstances would have to be amended to reflect the media and perhaps bespoke use.

For all other forms of literary content, the commissioner might offer the following:

2. Payment by day or part thereof

The Guild would recommend the following daily and hourly rates for writing work:

£250 – £350 for a full day
£150 for half a day (four hours)
£40 - 50 per hour

3. Payment for all rights in specific media

As with the type of agreement likely to be issued for daily, part-day or hourly contributions, non-time based contributions (i.e. standalone blogs, on-line diaries, online games, essays etc.) may be contracted on a so called 'all rights' basis. For example, the BBC may offer its Rights B Agreement in these circumstances. See the next section of the Guidelines for advice about rights.

Rights:

If a writer is contracted according to one of the Guild's Minimum Terms Agreements, then he or she should be remunerated according to the terms of that agreement where the likely use of the script indicates it appropriate. Any variation in the standard terms should be clearly indicated at the point of contracting, e.g. where no principle photography payment or (in the case of the BBC) additional public service payment will be made.

If a writer agrees to a daily, half-daily or hourly rate, or a non-time based 'all rights' agreement, the contract issued is likely to be for a buy-out of rights. In these cases, the Guild would strongly recommend that writers only agree to be bought out of their rights for use of the content online or the media for which it is negotiated and contracted. Other rights not specifically acquired should be subject to additional payments (i.e. television or radio transfer rights, spin-offs or commercial exploitation).

If an online drama transfers from the internet to television, radio or any other medium, then payment should be made according to the Guild's Minimum Terms Agreements.

If the content is commercially released then the writer should receive a royalty based on sales unless a bespoke and non-precedental arrangement has been agreed to the contrary.

The Guild would welcome feedback on these guidelines from members.

If you would like to make suggestions or have any queries about these guidelines, please contact the Writers' Guild office on 020 7833 0777 or via email at naomi@writersguild.org.uk.