

AUTHOR FEES ADVICE FOR SCHOOL AND LIBRARY VISITS



This Guide outlines good practice for authors and event organisers planning events in schools and other venues.

PRINCIPLES

1. Authors* should be valued and paid for their events, which are an important part of their profession.
2. Most authors are self-employed and unsalaried and have to account for preparation, administration, overheads and travelling time when setting a fee.
3. All authors are different and will set their own rates, terms and conditions.

**References to 'authors' or 'writers' also include illustrators.*

Events are part of a writer's work – often a major part – and therefore writers should be paid fairly for them. Many writers find setting fees awkward. Some often undercharge, meaning that they can be the lowest paid adults involved in the events they deliver.

Bookshops, festivals, conferences, schools, libraries and universities have different constraints and economic models. Bookshop events are almost always unpaid and festivals have a set rate (and the author should decide whether the offered rate is sufficient or acceptable), but the organiser or publisher should pay expenses; conferences should expect to pay more because the preparation is generally more arduous and the economic model different. The following guidance focuses mostly on events held at schools, libraries or universities.

Authors provide a variety of events and fee structures. Some offer a half-day or day, within which they may do a varying number of small workshops; others offer more formal one-hour talks or performances and may charge per event.

Some set a limit on the number of events within a day and a limit of two or three is not unusual, given the energy involved in talking to new audiences each time. Some restrict audience size, others do not. If they have to travel a substantial distance, some authors will require a full day's visit.

Organisers should remember that they are paying not simply for the hours of audience-contact, but also the time the author spends away from his or her desk to deliver the talk, and the hours of preparation, including the time spent in discussing and following up the events. Most authors will charge agreed travel and subsistence expenses separately. These should always be offered – an author should not be left out of pocket for attending an event.

Authors *and* organisers might find [Andrew Bibby's reckoner](#) useful. It shows daily freelance rates to equate with different salaries. According to this, to achieve a salary of £25k, a daily rate would need to be £283. To achieve a salary of £40k, the daily rate would be £426. Note that these assume that the author would be working every day which is unlikely. Thus if an author were to charge £400 for a day of school events, this may equate to only £200 per day, once preparation time is factored in, and an annual salary of under £20,000. By comparison £40k would be towards the lower end of the scale of a [Leading Practitioner](#), as an example.

There are some circumstances in which an author *might* do an event for a reduced fee, for example for multiple sessions, or to a local school or an organisation with which the author has personal connections. Around publication, authors may undertake some free promotional events arranged by or via the publisher, though expenses should always be paid, usually by the publisher.

Many authors feel uncomfortable asking for a reasonable fee for the work they do and the expertise they have. Author talks and workshops, particularly to young audiences, are vital and inspiring, with immense benefits reported by schools (see our report [Author Visits in Primary and Secondary Schools](#)). Their value is huge and should be recognised and recompensed.

OBSERVED RATES

We surveyed authors about what they consider when setting fees. Any figures we mention refer to fees in place up to the end of 2013. The following points emerged:

1. When we asked what authors tended to charge (in 2013) if they had a 'per event' fee, and ignoring special circumstances, figures generally ranged from a very low £100 (very rarely) for one hour of storytelling in a local library; £150 to £500 for a single school event, talk or workshop; and went up to £750 or more for keynote speeches for educational conferences or CPD (Continuing Professional Development). **Typical figures for a single talk or workshop in a school were from £150 to £250, plus full expenses.** There might be a reduction for a second or third talk. Most authors said that fees depended on distance and preparation time. Some authors would require more than one event within the day to make the trip work financially. Thus, a day within which the author offered three events would typically come to £500.
2. When we asked what authors tended to charge (in 2013) if they charged a half-day/daily fee, **figures ranged around £300 for a half-day and £400-500 for a day.** (The definition of a day varied; it might include time spent travelling to the school.) Some authors don't offer a half-day option, on the basis that in practice they lose the whole day. Where authors were charging as little as £350 for a day, they had been doing this for several years. Most felt it was too low and were considering raising it. **Those who were charging at least £400 were generally more satisfied that it approached a fair rate.**
3. Scottish Book Trust (SBT) has a well-established system which most Scottish authors follow (even when doing events outside Scotland) whereby the fee is always 'per event'. So, if an author charges £n for one talk, two talks are 2n and three talks 3n. Expenses are extra and always fully covered.
4. Some authors will, with prior agreement, give a Q&A or chat with a book group for no fee, as long as another talk has been paid for. Adding book sales (whether organised by the host or the author) can also help generate income for both author and host.
5. The majority of surveyed authors had put their fees up recently. Some build in extras for overnight stays (because of time lost on the travelling day) or for early starts or long journeys. Some authors will only do relatively local events and have therefore kept their fees to the lower end of the scale.
6. Some authors feel that they are pressured to charge tiny fees and/or no expenses because a school says it has no budget for talks. It is unfair to put an author in this position and authors should feel able to ask for a working wage. Before accepting any invitation, authors should consider what their time is worth and should remember that the teachers and all others involved are usually being paid a salary.
7. Where events were free or at a nominal fee, authors observed that schools often did not put as much preparation in to make the event work, leading to disappointment all round. Feedback showed that being paid tended to lead to a better experience for all involved.

Please note that our [Guide to Appearances](#) offers a sample invoice and detailed advice on the application of VAT and expenses if you are tax registered.

FILMING EVENTS

We will soon be offering detailed guidance on the recording of events. Meanwhile, note our existing advice:

The organisers should not make a recording or podcast of your talk, or publish or otherwise disseminate it, without your explicit consent. Many authors are not willing to agree to such wider use of their contribution; for instance it may inhibit how you talk, or the presentation could be one you may want to repeat. It can become very awkward arguing the point on the day itself, especially if you are part of a panel or are interviewing someone/being interviewed, and we strongly advise that you clarify your position, in writing, from the outset.

RESOURCES

Contact details and/or information on the types of author visits available can be found on the following websites:

- [AuthorBound](#) - a new service from the Booksellers Association designed to connect booksellers, publishers, and authors.
- [Booktrust](#) - inspires everyone to enjoy books, reading and writing and the lifelong benefits that they bring.
- [National Centre for Language and Literacy](#) - supports teachers, parents and governors through a unique collection of resources, publications, courses and conferences, and research.
- [National Literacy Trust](#) - a UK charity that transforms lives through literacy. [Interactive map listings for authors](#)
- [NAWE Professional Directory](#) - NAWE professional members providing services.
- [NibWeb](#) - a network for information book writers and editors.
- [Reading Zone](#) - everything you need to know about children's books and authors.
- [Scottish Book Trust](#) - the agency for the promotion of reading, writing and literature in Scotland. Subsidies for talks are available for Scottish schools and authors. See [Live Literature Funding](#)
- [SoA searchable database for authors](#) - a directory of all our members.
- [Start the Story Author Directory](#) - a new directory from *Start the Story* aimed at getting writers into schools.

There are agencies that specialise in the organisation of author visits. These include:

- [Speaking of Books](#) - a company that represents authors and arranges their visits.
- [Apples and Snakes](#) - performance poetry organisation: poets, events, education, features, resources, links and contact details.
- [Authors Aloud UK](#) - a company that specialises in arranging for authors to visit schools, libraries and other venues in the UK or abroad.
- [Contact an Author](#) - helps you find authors available for talks, workshops, school visits, interviews, after-dinner speaking, World Book Day events and commissions.
- [Patron of Reading](#) - matches schools looking for local authors and authors looking for local schools.
- [Pop Up](#) - arranges specialist whole-school literature programmes and creative events and opportunities for teachers.

See also:

- Author websites
- Publisher publicity departments. Be warned that they are usually very busy!

SoA Guides:

[Guide to Author Appearances](#)

[Guidelines for Schools Organising an Author Visit](#)

[Guidelines for Authors Speaking at Universities](#)

Other articles on fees:

Nicola Morgan's blog: [How Much Should Authors Charge for Events: What's an Author Event Worth?](#) and [Ten Tips for Author Event Organisers](#)

[Andrew Bibby's reckoner](#)

[Teacher pay scales](#)

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