

## GU WRITER'S GUIDELINES MAY 04, 2009

**Generic Universe Publishing** (GU) is looking for submissions for its **City Streets** product line as well as proposals for products for an upcoming 4th edition DnD (GSL) product line. GU is always open to proposals for other products.

### Proposals

When sending a proposal please send it in the body of an email to [submissions@genericuniverse.com](mailto:submissions@genericuniverse.com). Please give information in the following order: (1) your contact information, (2) which product line you would like to write for, (3) the tentative name for the product, (4) proposed word count and deadline, and (5) the details of the product itself. We'd also like to know about any writing experience you might have (previous publication is not necessary).

GU will be up front about what we do or do not like about your ideas. It is important to realize that many people have similar ideas. GU makes no guarantee that someone else hasn't proposed the same, or a similar, idea, or that something similar isn't already being worked on. In the unlikely event that two or more authors submit a similar idea, GU will contract with the author most likely to turn in a completed product.

Some general information about RPG Writing is found [here](#).

### Writing

The following two points are probably the most important in writing, both in general and for roleplaying games. Further documents and advice can be found at this website:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/index.html>

#### I. Use Active Voice

It is essential to write in active voice. What does this mean? Schools teach writing in various ways, sometimes using terms such as "verbs of being" and "action verbs" rather than "passive voice" and "active voice."

Active voice provides action or dynamic change while passive voice is static and simply exists. Determining whether or not your work is active or passive is easy; simply look for verbs of being, or "be-verbs." This includes any form of "be" such as was, is, were, am, are, and been. Try to eliminate these words by changing the structure of your sentence to make it more active. This is difficult when describing static rooms and locations, but with some effort sentences can be made more active.

Yarl was knocked backward by the troll's mighty blow.

The troll's mighty blow knocked Yarl backward.

In the second sentence emphasis is shifted from Yarl to the troll, who is actually performing the action. "Be" verbs do not always indicate passive voice, but they are a good indicator to watch out for. In addition to making your writing more dynamic and interesting, shifting from passive to active voice usually cuts down on excess verbiage.

#### II. Present Tense

While it is difficult to do when writing descriptive works, it is best to write in present tense whenever possible. The history of a location, the diabolical future plans of the evil villain, and the long-term goals of the king are all things you can't describe in present tense. Whenever you can shift to present tense, do so.

If a troll enters the room, Yarl will run away screaming.

If a troll enters the room, Yarl runs away screaming.

The second sentence is only a small change but shifting to present tense makes the text more immediate, active, and interesting and involves the reader more than the first.

Words to look for include will, could, should, and similar terms. The combined effort of shifting to present tense and eliminating passive voice where possible makes writing more dynamic and interesting.

The two points above have been the major errors in any of the submissions I have seen. They are also things that I constantly strive to improve upon in my own writing. Eliminating passive voice and writing in present tense are not always easy, but make the effort to do so.

#### A few other points:

**Spellchecking:** please check your work, I am using standard American English for those of you overseas. This means color instead of colour, etc. Also keep in mind a spellchecker is not going to check that you have used the correct words, if you type "read here" when you meant to say "red hair" the spellchecker will not help you.

**Slang and Abbreviations:** avoid slang, even slang particular to the game style you are writing for. This does not mean you can't create abbreviations or "new slang" particular to what you are writing. Simply make certain they are well defined. If you are going to use things like PC or GM, write them out the first time: ie. Player Character (PC).

## Formatting:

If I am going to review something it is probably best to use the format that I will want to use for layout. This makes my life easier and makes it easier for me to review your proposal or submission.

**First, use single line spacing.**

**Second, under the paragraph formatting set the “after” spacing to 6 pt. This is under**

**Format->Paragraph in the Mac version of MS Word, not sure where it will be in your word processor. It will probably be in the same menu where you set your line spacing**

**Third, do not indent your paragraphs.**

**Fourth, I prefer MS Word .doc files (the slightly older format). I can handle .docx but simple .doc files are MUCH easier for me. If you must send something else please send the file as an RTF (Rich Text Format) file.**

I can deal with any font you use, I will probably change it to Times or Georgia for review and editing, but I'll be using a different font for the final published items. It is easy enough to do a global change to the font that I can simply take care of that. Write in whatever font you find easiest to read and review for yourself.

If you are submitting a **City Streets** location please use Verdana as a font for body text and TRAJAN PRO BOLD for titles, location names, etc.

## Future Open Calls

GU is planning more products and will be looking for writers and/or offering open calls in the near future. Check the Open Call page for more information on any active open calls.

## City Streets

The **City Streets** product line is a set of highly detailed locations that is not linked to any specific game system. These locations should begin with a general description of the exterior of the building or area and then follow with some information on the history or background. Then move to detailed descriptions of the interior, following a numbered map if the location has more than several rooms. After the room/interior descriptions there should be a “Personalities” section where the NPCs are described (see the example below). The final section is the “Adventure Ideas” section where you should describe at least 2 possible adventure ideas involving the location you have described and the NPCs living and working there. Provide enough information for the GM to work with, each idea can use a full paragraph, or more if needed (don't go overboard though).

Please use Verdana for the body text font and TRAJAN PRO BOLD for headers, rooms, etc.

A better idea of what we are looking for can be found by looking at **Gior's Glassworks**, a free release available at RPGNow and related OneBookShelf sites.

Please examine the Sparks introduction closely as this is the system we used to help describe the skill level of NPCs. If you have questions about the skill system contact GU.

Right now payment for **City Streets** locations is \$0.005 US per word. That's 1/2 of a cent US per word. In addition, we are probably capping payments at \$25 per location. The budget for **City Streets** locations is small, but so are the sales. While some publishers offer a % of net profits, often 25%, it would require more than 100 sales at full price for a writer to earn more than \$25. To date, no CS product has sold more than 50 copies. Obviously, we have been in business for 4 months and hope that over time this will change, but we can't count on that. Paying writers what we can upfront allows us to put products on sale or bundle them into larger promotions without worrying about hurting a particular author's earnings. It also guarantees that you'll get paid (not much, but you'll get paid).