

HAPPENSTANCE DOS AND DON'TS 2012

	<i>Before submitting your work:</i>	✓
DO:	Read the submission guidelines on the website – even if you’ve looked at them before. They may have been updated. (If they require you to include a stamped addressed envelope big enough to return the poems in, do remember to include one.)	
DO:	Include a covering letter (word-processed). In this, briefly listing reputable magazines etc where your work has been published. (If you aren’t sure what’s meant by ‘reputable’, ask around, or look at the list of recommended magazines at www.happenstancepress.com)	
DO:	Include your name & address clearly (but unobtrusively) on each sheet.	
DO:	Give each poem its own sheet of paper.	
DO:	Present your poems in a similar size and style to the average poetry book or magazine (usually a plainish font, size 12).	
DO:	Check your apostrophes. Where your poetry is concerned, you need to care enough to get it right. Every time.	
DO:	Tell the publisher if you have won or placed in a competition, but don’t assume competitions are everything. Placing in good quality magazines is, if anything, more significant.	
DO:	Tell the publisher about publications you have read on her list. You need to have found some of them worthwhile and interesting. Otherwise, why would you want to be included on that list yourself?	
DO:	Tell the publisher if you play an active role in local poetry groups, writers’ circles, festivals etc	
DO:	Tell the publisher if another poet on the same list has advised you to send in a submission.	
	<i>After you’ve heard back and perhaps had your submission rejected:</i>	✓
DO:	Reply to a rejection letter if it says something useful. Say thank you if someone has spent time with your work. Courtesy gets your name remembered. You want to be a <i>person</i> , not just print on a page.	
DO:	Read any written communication from the publisher carefully. Even if it’s a rejection, it may contain useful comments. Remember publishing is a business. The main reason for rejection is because the publisher doesn’t think he or she can sell your work effectively enough to keep the business going. Reflect on this. Work out why.	
DO:	If not enraged and alienated, keep in touch with the publisher and take an interest in what they are doing – look at the website every few months to see what’s going on. Read the blog if there is one. If you’re interested in having poetry published, you should be watching a few of the publishers who may, at some point, be on your side.	
DO:	Keep an eye on the poetry publishing business. Read about what’s going on. Go to festivals. Meet other poets. Make contacts. Make friends by being nice to people and interested in what they’re doing.	
DO:	Find good readers for your poems, astute people who will give truthful reactions and help you improve. Distrust people who always say everything you write is marvellous.	

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DO:	Talk to other poets who have published first collections. Ask them how it worked, how they managed it.	
DO:	Remember the option of poetry pamphlet competitions.	
DO:	Look meticulously at the acknowledgements page of new poetry collections, especially those of any publisher you're interested in. See where those poets are placing their poems – which magazines. Try to get your work there too.	
DO:	Be ambitious for your poems. Aim to make them better and better and better. As good as you can get them in a lifetime.	
DO:	Have fun. Somehow. <i>Do</i> have fun. Make poetry friends. Laugh about it all. If trying to get your poetry published is making you miserable, change the game.	
DO:	Write short reviews of poetry publications you've enjoyed and post them on Amazon, or even better – on GoodReads. This is good for your own prose style and it's good for the poets you're supporting. You don't need to rave slavishly – focus on what you found interesting, rather praise/criticise. But avoid lambasting poetry you hate. Life is too short. It doesn't reflect well on you and it'll make you enemies.	
DO:	Keep buying newly published poetry books and pamphlets – buy those you like and want to support. It's crucial to keep the business going. If you don't, the chances of your work being published diminish accordingly.	
DO:	Write good prose. Remember Coleridge's dictum: prose = good words in the best order; poetry = the best words in the best order. If you can't get the order right for the good words, your poetry may not be that hot.	
DO:	Read <i>101 Ways to Make Poems Sell</i> by Chris Hamilton-Emery. There are also <i>Dos</i> and <i>Don'ts</i> on the Salt website. More useful advice on the Shearsman website too.	
DO:	Read <i>How (Not) To Get Your Poetry Published</i> , if you haven't already read it, by Helena Nelson. It says all the things she couldn't fit in here.	
DO:	Remember there ARE other publishers. New imprints spring up all the time. Keep your eye on the pulse. There's a useful list on the Happen- <i>Stance</i> website.	
DO:	Read the DON'Ts!	
	<i>Before submitting your work:</i>	
DON'T:	Present your poems in <i>italic</i> or bold font.	
DON'T:	Present your poems in fonts that are huge , tiny or inconsistent sizes from one page to another. (Honestly: stick to plain and ordinary – Calibri or Arial or Garamond or even Times Roman – size 12!	
DON'T:	Centre your poems unless there is a VERY good reason for it.	
DON'T:	Clip your poems together.	
DON'T:	Confuse hyphens and dashes. Hyphens are short, have no space on either side and are used to join two words together eg part-time. Dashes are longer and normally have a space before <i>and</i> after.	

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DON'T:	Number the pages.	
DON'T:	Send a pamphlet you have already self-published, expecting the publisher to publish them again.	
DON'T:	Offer to pay for publication of your poems.	
DON'T:	List a track record of publications which which does nothing for your street cred eg. school magazine, local newspaper, gravestones etc.	
DON'T:	Include a set of 'puffs' (high praise from the good and great) e.g "Seamus Heaney said my work was excellent when he visited my school." Let the publisher make up her own mind.	
DON'T:	Present poems that include tipp-x, deletions, coffee stains or spelling mistakes.	
DON'T:	Send more poems than the submission guidelines advise. Better to send fewer. The publisher, if she likes them, will ask for more.	
DON'T:	Send your poems 'recorded delivery'. If the publisher is out when they arrive, she will have to go to the sorting office to pick them up. She probably won't do this, which will mean the poems come back to you again.	
DON'T:	Email to ask whether your poems have arrived safely. If you are concerned, (it is relatively rare for things to get lost in the post in the UK) include a self-addressed, stamped postcard, so the publisher can simply drop it in the mailbox to confirm receipt.	
DON'T:	Tell the publisher by what date you would like her to reply to your submission.	
DON'T:	Put © Millie Mathiesson at the end of each poem. It will drive the publisher NUTS. a) He or she has no possible interest in stealing your poem. b) You automatically own copyright of your work and do not need to assert it in a publication submission.	
DON'T:	Telephone the publisher to follow up your submission. If you make them feel pressurised, you will alienate them.	
DON'T:	Fret because the poems take ages to come back. Poems take ages to read, if they're read properly. And the more submissions there are, the longer the ages get.	
	<i>After your work has been returned:</i>	
DON'T:	Take it personally, even though it feels personal. 99 out of 100 submissions are rejected, if not more.	
DON'T:	Brood about rejection. What the hell! Just think hard about your options. Use your intelligence. Keep sending to magazines. <i>Good</i> magazines. Keep writing poems.	
DON'T:	Send hate mail to the publisher. <i>Please.</i>	
DON'T:	Send self-bound copies of your poems, pamphlets or books. Send things in the usual submission format of loose leaf pages, each with the poem & your name and address.	
DON'T:	Assume publishing your poetry is the only way to prove you write good poems. It's not.	
DON'T:	Give up!	

