

# Host a Children's Writing Workshop

## Charmaine Clancy and Karen Tyrrell's Checklist

- Apply for a Blue Card (or an exemption if you are already a registered teacher). All assistants or crew you use will also need to apply for a Blue Card.
- Check insurance needs – your venue should have insurance to cover any incidents, but you might need Public Liability (this is necessary for visiting expos, cons and markets anyway)
- Choose your focus. Will you work on descriptive prose, characterisation or will you write about dragons? If you're published, choose a topic that relates to your books.
- Identify and list your qualifications for this workshop. E.g. Teacher, author, bubbly personality, etc.
- Identify and write down your targeted audience. Children, teens, fantasy writers?
- Decide on date/dates. Is this a one-off workshop, or a series of meetings for a writing club? If it's a single workshop, school holidays or Saturdays work well. If you'll be meeting regularly, you could make it one afternoon after school.
- How long will your workshop run? Keep it to 1 – 2 hours if it's your first one. If you've done a few, you may want to try a full day event. Any more than one hour and you should provide food.
- List possible and contact to check availability and price. Some suggestions:
  - Community Halls
  - Book stores – many have cafes that can be used when not open to the public
  - Libraries
  - Schools
  - Skype – you can offer Skype sessions for schools or writing clubs
- Plan catering – cheap snacks, or full lunch? Keep food simple, don't cater for every food requirement. Attendees can bring their own food as well. DO find out from parents if children have serious allergies and what you should do in the event of a reaction.
- Promote your workshop! Here's some ideas:
  - BUILD YOUR EMAIL LIST – parents want you to let them know about the next workshop
  - Create a dedicated presenter's page on your website
  - Blog about your upcoming workshop and see if others will blog about it
  - Create flyers – if you have InDesign skills, great! You can save these as an image to share online and PDF for printing. Vistaprint offer nice designs in postcards you can use to distribute. Otherwise, children's writing workshops are so sought after, even a marker and blank paper can create a fun flyer for distribution. Put them up in local stores, leave in book stores and community offices and even letterbox drop if you like walking your neighbourhood
  - Post to Facebook and find groups that talk about children, education or family events – you can even boost posts if you want paid advertising
  - If you take bookings through Eventbrite, they will advertise your workshop when people book other events that are similar
- Take bookings. Here are some options:
  - On your website insert a booking form widget (not too hard on a Wordpress site).
  - PayPal allows you to create payment buttons for your site. You can also issue invoices and allow part-payments
  - Email out a booking form
  - Old school – leave a number or email and allow attendees to book and pay on arrival
  - EVENTBRITE – this my choice because they take payment AND promote your workshop

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## Charmaine Clancy and Karen Tyrrell's Checklist (page 2)

- Prepare resources – make sure your website address goes on every printed handout. Some suggestions for your workshop:
  - Create a 'sign in' sheet. Collect child's name, parent name, parent email and PARENT MOBILE (in the event you need to call them during the workshop), parent signature for drop off and pick up. I also include a tick box that asks for permission to take photos and place up on the workshop website
  - Quick and fun 'warm-ups' – writing activities that take 3 minutes or less and require a silly or funny response (this can help new attendees feel less pressure to produce amazing prose)
  - Getting to know you activities – even if it's just going around and asking each attendee to say their name and their favourite genre
  - Picture prompts – print in colour and laminate, you can reuse them again later
  - Maps
  - Role playing games (RPGs) like Dungeons and Dragons can inspire fantasy tales
  - Info sheets on genre, story structure or writing tips (just don't make it feel like school)
  - Story starters
  - Fill in the gap stories (good for younger children and helps them learn structure)
  - Muddled fairytales (also known as fractured)
  - Character profile sheets
  - Dress up costumes (capoes, hats, accessories)
  - Interesting objects as writing prompts
  - Shape poetry silhouettes
  - Have some non-writing activities as well, colour-in pages, book marks to make or craft
  
- Prepare for the day:
  - If you feel more comfortable with a script, write it and practise
  - Arrive early to set up and layout room
  - Will you use a whiteboard or a projector? Check they're available and if you need to bring a clicker or markers
  - Will you wear a costume?
  - Photocopy handouts
  - Pack printed lined sheets, or cheap notebooks and pens or pencils (for those attendees who don't bring anything)
  - Take books to sign and sell – children will want a souvenir so make your inscription personal (e.g. Great to meet you at the Dragon Writing Workshop!)
  - Plan next workshop – you can take bookings at this workshop
  - Will you have gift bags?
  - Smile in the mirror and tell yourself – 'I got this, I'm going to have FUN!'