



2010 Willamette Writers Conference

Volunteer Guide

*Thank you for volunteering at the
Willamette Writers Conference.*

*Your efforts are vital to a successful conference,
and we appreciate your willingness to help.*

*This resource will answer most of your questions about
volunteering at the conference.*



General Information

Contact info

During the conference, go to any conference manager when a problem arises that you cannot solve.

If you can't make your scheduled assignment, let the volunteer coordinator (Robert or Donna Kienbaum for consult volunteers; Ted Blasche for all other volunteers) know as soon as possible, so we can arrange for a replacement. If you do not come to your assignment, you must pay full registration costs for the day if you go to any workshops or consults.

Where to get info during the conference

Volunteer-related questions

Check the PDX room for information.

Ask the volunteer coordinators.

Ask a floater for help if you are on assignment.

Conference-related questions

Go to the registration desk.

Consult-related questions

Ask Corey Stixrud or someone at the consult desk.

Other resources

Information table for general information.

Your registration packet will have all workshops, events, etc.

The hotel concierge can answer non-conference related questions (e.g., transportation, Internet access, accommodations, etc.)

Partial list of managers you can turn to

Stefan Feuerherdt, conference chair

Donna and Robert Kienbaum, Ted Blasche, volunteer coordinators

Diana Page Jordan, workshops

Bill Johnson, registration desk

Herbert Piekow, consult pit boss

Corey Stixrud, consult desk

Brian Batson, consult desk

Mary Margaret Maitland, Silent Auction

Volunteer expectations

The conference is non-stop motion, and to keep the flow going in the right direction, we ask you as a volunteer to:

- Show up to your work station on time.
- Work your entire shift.
- Keep a positive attitude.
- Be professional and courteous to all guests, staff, hotel staff, agents, producers, etc.
- Respond to all questions immediately; if you don't know the answer, find someone who does.

While we try not to impose too many rules on volunteers, we ask that you:

- Do not chew gum.
- Wear your volunteer vests during the hours you're volunteering.
- Wear your name tags at all times.
- Smoke only during breaks in designated smoking areas. (The Sheraton is a smoke-free environment.)
- Do not drink alcohol during conference hours (exception: banquet).

What to wear

- Dress appropriately. You represent Willamette Writers, and we are a professional organization with members serious about their writing. How volunteers dress reflects on the entire organization. So...be comfortable and casual while also being professional.
- Wear comfortable shoes! Tennis shoes are fine.

Other duties as assigned

While you will all have duties specific to your assignments, we also ask that you:

- Help attendees when asked. When attendees or presenters see a volunteer vest, they assume you can help. If you don't know the answer, tell them you'll find someone to help, and then lead them to that person. Your customer service skills are imperative here. Be polite, helpful, and supportive.
- Keep conference people informed about problems—even if it isn't your area. For example, if you see someone acting inappropriately, hounding an agent, etc., let the volunteer coordinator know so she can find the right person to intervene.
- Help your co-volunteers if they turn to you for assistance or you see they're overwhelmed.
- Let the front desk of the hotel know if you spot water stations, break stations, or restrooms that need cleaning or supplies.
- Support each other. If someone needs a break, fill in or help him or her find someone who will. When in doubt, go to the PDX room.

Things you should know

Locations

- Classrooms
- Consults (both individual and group)
- Bathrooms and phones
- Locations to get water, coffee, etc

Logistics

- Break and lunch times for attendees
- Evening events
- Special events
- Where to get Internet access
- How to contact other WW staff or hotel/conference staff

Helpful information (you can also refer people to the hotel concierge if they need this info)

- Nearby restaurants
- How to find/call a cab
- How to get public transportation

Lost and found

The hotel handles lost and found through its front desk. If someone leaves something behind in a classroom or consult area, take the item there. Direct attendees to this area if they tell you they have lost something.

PDX room

This will be your sanctuary. Go here for peace, solitude (well, sort of), and answers. This room is strictly for the day you are volunteering, so please don't use it on your non-volunteer days.

Go to the PDX room to check in when you arrive.

What you'll find here

- Schedules
- Someone with a phone to call the volunteer coordinator or her assistance
- Supplies
- Someone to help with problems
- Snacks

Schedules

Sign in and out for all your shifts in the PDX room regardless of where you will work.

Thursday

As assigned by the volunteer coordinator.

Friday, Saturday, and Sunday

If you have a morning shift, arrive at 7:30. Go to the PDX room, not the registration area, to sign in.

If you have an afternoon shift, you will need to be at the conference until 5:30. Check in the PDX room at 11:30 before lunch, but then go eat!

Breaks and lunch

You have paid for breakfast, lunch, and breaks, so help yourself to food and beverages in conference areas. Breakfast buffets are great, so arrive early enough to take advantage of the offerings before you need to be at your work station.

General breaks

If you're on duty as a volunteer during a break, you continue to be on duty during attendee breaks, but by all means, go help yourself to refreshments. That said, please don't use your volunteer status to cut in line.

If you need a break during your shift, let the volunteer coordinator know before you begin your shift so we can make sure to have someone take over for you.

Lunch break

Morning volunteers are free to go into the lunch room once they have delivered all evaluations to the PDX room.

Afternoon volunteers need to leave the lunch room a bit early so they can be at their assigned stations 15 minutes before the afternoon session begins.

Pitches

Many of you will be pitching projects. If you have a pitch during your scheduled volunteer assignment, let the volunteer coordinator or her assistant know so they can arrange someone to fill in for you. Give yourself time to get to your pitch on time because nobody waits!

In the event of an emergency

Emergencies are extremely rare, but can occur. If one happens:

- Immediately notify the hotel staff so they can follow their procedures to deal with the situation. Then notify the registration desk.
- Do not take matters into your own hands unless it is a life-threatening situation such as a heart attack, and you are qualified to respond.

Customer Service

1. Problem solving. If an attendee (our customer) is talking to you, it's because he or she has a problem. It might be as simple as he or she doesn't know where the restroom is, but if someone has to go and doesn't know where the bathroom is..... it's a problem. So listen and provide an answer or solution. If you can't, find someone who can.

2. Communication (or sometimes negotiation). You have to be able to communicate clearly, quickly, and pleasantly. "Please. Thank you. You are welcome."

3. Expertise/empowerment. You can only go so far to help the attendee. If you think something more should be done (e.g., a refund for a consult), please turn the situation over to a manager, discreetly giving the manager your opinion. The manager will consider your thoughts and weigh them against other factors when dealing with the customer.

4. Respect. Attendees deserve respect. There is never a reason to lose professional composure. If you ever find yourself in danger of losing patience with a customer, you need to escalate the situation to someone else. A simple, "Perhaps I am not explaining this very well" will do the trick. Then turn the person over to a manager.

5. Empathy. It is crucial that you see the attendees as human beings. The phrase, "I can see why you—" is very powerful for both the customer and you.

Example: You're working at the information table and an attendee comes up to complain the coffee has run out. It's not your responsibility; it's the hotel's responsibility. You can say, "Thank you for telling me this. I can understand why you thought I'd be the person to tell. Unfortunately, I cannot leave this table. Please go to the hotel desk in the main lobby and tell them so they can page for a fill up. I appreciate that you noticed it."

Isn't that much better than "What do you want me to do about it?"

- From Beth Lyons, Manager of Powells.com (with a few changes to make this specific to WWC)



Helpful hints

- Have a positive attitude. Be motivated, energized, willing to perform duties as requested and provide excellent customer service.
- Be on time and ready to work upon arrival.
- Provide useful answers. Check schedule updates when you arrive. If you don't know the answer, find someone who does. If you can't leave your post, inform the attendee what steps to take to find the answer he or she needs.
- Attendees may get frustrated or upset. They might turn to you to vent. Don't take anger personally. Try to calm the person down. Empathize, look for a solution, and find someone who can help.

Workshop monitors



Wow! Talk about a great job. You get to sit in on some great workshops, and you only need to do a few things in exchange for learning things that will help you with your writing.

Your role as a workshop volunteer is to ensure that the instructor has everything he or she needs to teach and to keep track of workshop evaluations.

Arrive at your classroom about 15 minutes before the workshop begins.

Your contact person during the conference: Volunteer coordinator.

Duties

- Make sure the presenter has a pitcher of water and a clean glass.
- Confirm with the instructor that the presentation tools requested are in the classroom. Some instructors requested a projector, some want a flip chart, etc. There's not enough of everything to go around, but A/V support will move equipment as needed during the breaks.
- Ask the instructor if he or she needs assistance setting up. If someone needs help doing something you don't know how to do (like setting up a laptop and projector), contact the volunteer coordinator right away.
- Distribute handouts to attendees when the instructor is ready.
- If you run out of handouts, make copies and bring them back as soon as possible. We'll give you further instructions on where to go for this. You can also ask a floater to make copies for you.
- Familiarize yourself with the room's lighting so you can adjust lighting as necessary for any A/V presentations.
- Station yourself at the door as attendees arrive, making sure they all have badges. If someone does not, politely ask him or her to go to the registration desk to get one. Do not admit anyone without the badge.
- Close the classroom door when the class begins because outside noise can make it difficult for those in the back of the room to hear the presenter.
- When the room is over crowded, stand at the door and tell people the workshop has been filled to capacity.
 - Show people standing at the back of the room to available seats.
 - If there are more people in attendance than there are seats, people are welcome to stand in the back of the room **if space permits. Blocking the doorway is a fire hazard.**
 - Post a "Sorry, Full" sign on the door, and leave the door closed.
- Ask the presenter if he or she would like to be introduced. If so, give a brief introduction that consists of the presenter's name and the workshop title. "Willamette Writers is happy to present X, who will now lead X workshop."
- Unfortunately, room temperature cannot be changed. It can indeed get hot when the room is crowded. Sometimes it's also cold. So, dress in layers. If the attendees complain, explain empathetically that it cannot be changed.

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- If you need help with crowd control, ask the floater to contact the volunteer coordinator or her assistant.
 - Have some basic cleaning supplies (paper towels) on hand in case of spills (coffee, water, etc.)

Evaluations

Make sure all workshop attendees have an evaluation before class begins.

At the end of class, remind attendees to fill out the evaluations and hand them in to you. Please do not mix evaluations from different workshops together.

Return completed evaluations to the PDX room. There will be boxes with folders set up for the evaluations (organized alphabetically by instructor name). Please put the evaluations in the correct spot, as there will be about 4,000 of these to sort through after the conference.

General

Be courteous and respectful towards instructors and attendees.

Don't pitch your project to the instructor during this time (agents, editors, etc. are teaching some of the classes.)

Consult area

Wow! Great opportunity to meet agents, producers, editors, etc. and to see some really happy people who have just made successful pitches. That said, this area is known for being hectic, and you may have to be assertive to make sure things flow on schedule.



Consult desk area

Herbert and Corey will lead the way. Do whatever they ask. Stay calm. People can get upset in this area if they didn't get the consult they signed up for or if someone didn't show. Do not take it personally. Smile. Empathize. Offer an alternative.

Consult locations

One-on-one consults are in the Ballroom. **Group consults** are in the Mt. Adams Room.

Outside timekeeper (both individual and group)

The timekeeper outside the room announces when it's time to go in. Pitches are on a very tight schedule. You must be on top of the time every minute. Call out a five-minute warning before it's time to enter the pitch area. Don't let anyone in ahead of time.

When announcing the next session, say something to the effect, "This is for the one-on-one consults only. If you have a group consult, you need to go to the Mt. Adams Room."

Inside timekeeper

- Know where agents, editors, etc. are so you can help attendees find their way quickly.
- Call out the three-minute warning.
- Politely ask attendees who have lingered to leave so the next attendees can begin. If anyone consistently goes over time, ask Herbert to address the situation.

Floater/runner

- Make sure agents, editors, film managers, etc. have water and/or anything else they need.
- Keep in close touch with inside timekeeper and go for anything needed, including supplies, things for agents, editors, etc. Work with gatekeeper/timekeeper to keep things flowing well.
- Relieve people as needed. Arrange break times with Herbert to avoid any problems with flow.
- Know all positions so you can fill in as needed.

Gatekeeper

- Open door to let people out at end of session. Close door once session begins. Hand out the evaluations as people leave the room. (The completed evaluations go into a box near the registration desk.)
- Along with **sheriff**, help with crowd control.

Sherriff

- Crowd control outside of pitch room.
- Make announcements as necessary.

Group consult additional information

Team of two works together to get people to pitches on schedule. Use the list you are provided to verify agents/editor s/producers are there as scheduled. If not, let Herbert know.

Information team



Your job as a member of the information team is invaluable. You are officially the “go-to” person.

We’ve included a list of frequently asked questions, so please familiarize yourself with it before you take your shift. That said, no matter how much we prepare you, it’s a guarantee you’re going to get some questions nobody could anticipate.

So where do you send the person for answers?

Refunds, etc

Registration desk for conference or special event.
Consult problems/refund line if for a consult.

Volunteering next year

Send to PDX room.

Transportation questions

Direct person to concierge.

Hotel questions

Direct person to concierge.

Medical concerns

Direct person to concierge.

Nightlife in Portland

Direct person to concierge.

Laundry questions (yes, people spill things)

Direct person to concierge if he or she is staying at the hotel. Otherwise, empathize. We don’t have any supplies on hand for spills on clothing.

Lost and found items

Send to hotel’s lost and found area, located at the hotel’s front desk.

Other volunteer positions

Workshop floaters

You will fill in for others during pitches and/or if someone calls in unable to attend, run errands, and check to make sure monitors have what they need. You may also be asked to help out in other areas.

PDX room monitors

You will make sure all information posted is current, will answer volunteer questions, help other volunteers, make sure the PDX room has the correct supplies and snacks, and contact the volunteer coordinator and her assistant or other managers as needed. You'll provide support and encouragement when it gets hectic and volunteers run in to gather their wits.

You need to stay in the PDX room your entire shift. If you need to leave for a pitch, arrange that with the volunteer coordinator at the beginning of your shift.

You are not responsible for items other volunteers leave in the room. However, you should not let anyone not on the day's +volunteer schedule use the room for any reason.

VIP room monitors

You will make sure there are snacks and supplies on hand and that the room is tidy. You will also help agents, editors, etc. if they stop in and need something. You need to stay in the VIP room your entire shift. If you need to leave for a pitch, arrange that with the volunteer coordinator at the beginning of your shift.

Registration desk

Bill Johnson is in charge of this area and will provide direction to volunteers working this area.

Pitch practice

Jackie Blain is in charge of this area and will provide direction to volunteers working this area.

Silent Auction

Mary Margaret Maitland is in charge of this area and will provide direction to volunteers working this area.

On-Site Conference FAQ

Getting to the conference

How do I get to Sheraton Airport Hotel?

The Sheraton Airport Hotel is located near the Portland Airport, on Airport Way (the road that runs into the airport terminal).

Northbound Traffic: Take I-5 north, take I-84 toward The Dalles, and follow the signs to the airport. Or take I-205 northbound to the airport exit 24B. This will put you onto Airport Way. Go to the exit for the frontage road (about ½ mile past the light at 82nd). Turn right into the frontage road and left into the Sheraton parking lot. The Hampton Inn is next door to the Sheraton, and you may park here as well as at the Sheraton.

Southbound Traffic: Take I-5 south and follow signs to the airport. Or take I-205 southbound and cross the Glen Jackson Bridge over the Columbia River to the airport exit. It is the first exit once you cross the bridge. Turn right onto Airport Way. Go to the exit for the frontage road (about ½ mile past the light at 82nd). Turn right into the frontage road and left into the Sheraton parking lot. The Hampton Inn is next door to the Sheraton, and you may park here as well as at the Sheraton.

You can also take the MAX to the airport and call the Sheraton shuttle service. Be sure to allot ample time.

Where do I park?

Parking is available around the Sheraton, including numbered parking spaces. Parking is free. People can park in the Sheraton or Hampton Inn lots because they are owned by the same company.

Where do I go once I arrive?

If you are a volunteer, go to the PDX room near the elevators on the west side of the hotel.

If you are staying at the hotel, go to the hotel desk in the main lobby to check in.

For conference registration, go to the registration area at the south end of the Mt. Hood Foyer. Enter through Mt. Hood SE entry. If you enter through the main hotel doors, go through the main lobby and take the hallway to the right.

I didn't get a room here at the Sheraton and they are full. Are there other hotels nearby?

Hampton Inn (503) 288-2423 (next door to the Sheraton)

Embassy Suites PDX-503-460-3000 (across Airport Way from the Sheraton)

Holiday Inn PDX-503-256-5000

Alderwood Inn 503. 255.8700

Red Lion 503.255.6722



Registration

I registered in advance. Where do I pick up my registration packet?

Thursday evening from 6 to 9, and Friday all day there will be tables against the south wall of the Mt. Hood Foyer with packets in alphabetical order. After that, they will be at the registration desk.

Please go to the table that contains packets for the first letter of your last name. Lines for picking up registration packets are divided alphabetically to permit us to serve you faster. Packets contain your schedule, tickets to special events (check the back of your badge), and general information. If payment is still due, you will be asked to make payment at the registration desk.

How do I register at the conference?

If you did not register for the conference in advance, you can register at our registration desk in the Mt. Hood Foyer. We take cash, checks, and credit/debit cards.

You may use the registration form found in the back of our conference pamphlet or download one from the website; it's included with the conference brochure.

Where do I go if I need to pay or have problems?

If you find any problems with your registration, go to the registration desk.

If I need to cancel an appointment, will my money be refunded?

If Willamette Writers made an error, you will get a full refund. If you simply want to change your schedule during the conference, please go to the problem line at the consult desk, and we'll do everything we can to resolve your schedule. If you simply want to cancel your appointment rather than trading or rescheduling, we will try to sell the appointment you have to give up to someone else. If we can re-sell the consult, we will refund your money.

Consult / pitch appointments / group meetings

Can I purchase consult/pitch appointments during the conference?

Yes, but it is subject to availability. Please go to the consult desk. Someone will be happy to help you. You must be registered to attend the conference at least one day to sign up for pitches, and your pitches will be scheduled on the day you are registered to attend.

You may also purchase additional group meetings in the consult area.

There is ONE check-in area for consults. It is located next to the consult desk.

What should I do if I need to change a consult appointment?

Go to the consult desk. Please note that the consult desk is open for changes and problems on Thursday evening, August 5th, from 6 to 9 p.m. Sales will open Friday at 9 a.m.

If I need to cancel an appointment, will my money be refunded?

If you should find your schedule conflicted during the conference, please talk to someone in the consult area, and we'll do everything we can to sell that appointment to someone else and re-schedule you for another time.

Where do I go to check in for my appointment?

There is ONE check-in area for consults, which is next to the consult desk. The consult staff will direct you where to wait.

Because of the traffic flow, it is important to enter and leave in a quiet and timely fashion, whether you are doing a one-on-one pitch in the Mt. Hood Ballroom or a group meeting in Mt. Adams.

Books and signings

Can I buy books at the conference?

Yes, please shop Barnes and Nobles Booksellers on site as it continues to be a hearty supporter of this conference, and it contributes funds to Books for Kids and Young Willamette Writers Programs, both of which serve youth through Willamette Writers.

Where is the Barnes and Noble bookstore located?

In the Cascade Foyer near the registration area.

Will books by signing authors be available?

Yes. We will have signings at every break. The schedule is in registration packets as well as on a sign at the Barnes and Noble location.

When and where will the signings be held?

Authors will sign books daily at morning and afternoon breaks. Authors may sign at their discretion during other times.

Special events

What special events will take place at this year's conference?

“Pitch with the Pros” Film and Lit Pitch Practice (Free)

Thursday, August 5th, 7 - 9 p.m. Lit is in St. Helens; Film is in Garden and Cascade.

Writers & Actors Lab with reception

Friday, August 6th, 5 - 9 p.m. Events include a reception with light refreshments and a Writers/Actors Lab.

Awards Banquet & Keynote Address by Chuck Palahniuk (\$45)

Saturday, August 7, 6:30 p.m. Mt Hood Ballroom. No host bar. 5 p.m. Mt Hood Foyer. A second bar will open in the Mt. Hood Ballroom at 6.

The Lonely Scribe Silent Auction

Begins Thursday evening; ends Sunday at 1 p.m. St. Helens Foyer.

Can I purchase tickets to these events at the conference?

Banquet tickets will be available at the registration desk only if someone decides to resell a ticket they purchased..

Free on-site help

Manuscript ER and Pitch Practice

9-12 & 1:30 – 4 Fri/Sat; 9-12 Sun

Garden Foyer

Free 15-minute sessions. First come, first served.

Sign up sheet available.

Meals

What meals are covered by my conference registration?

A breakfast buffet is served from 7:30-8:45 a.m. daily, with seating in the Mount Hood Ballroom.

Lunch will be either a buffet (Friday) or seated meal (Saturday and Sunday) from noon-1:15 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, and from noon-1 p.m. on Sunday in the Mount Hood Ballroom. Lunch does not require a ticket unless you have requested a vegetarian or gluten free lunch. The Friday deli buffet includes vegetarian or gluten free options you select on your own.

Morning and afternoon breaks will feature complimentary coffee, tea, lemonade, iced tea, and water. You may purchase soda or mixed drinks independently. Should you wish to purchase additional meals, they will be available in the hotel restaurant and bar off the main lobby.

What will be served?

Breakfast and lunch on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday are included with the registration charges, so there are no additional charges.

The **breakfast menu** is a slight variation on the following Friday, Saturday, and Sunday: eggs, breakfast potatoes, bacon, pastries coffee, tea, cocoa, and juices.

Friday lunch

Deli sandwich buffet - Chefs choice salad, chips, coffee, tea, iced tea.

Saturday lunch

Asian Salad Buffet – Cabbage/romaine salad w/ cilantro, water chestnuts. Sweet & sour chicken, tofu, vegetables, steamed brown rice, rolls.

Sunday lunch

Pork or Chicken Carnitas, vegetable fajitas, black beans and Spanish rice. With Cabbage slaw and Jiciama Salad.

If you need a vegetarian or gluten free lunch, you must let us know when you register.

Saturday Awards Banquet (\$45)

Choice of one (choose when your purchase ticket)
Stuffed Portobello Mushroom w/ Spinach and Orzo
Beef Bourguignonne
Grilled Alaskan Cod



Special needs

Who do I speak to if I have special needs?

If you register online, please enter the information in the appropriate spot. If you forget, please e-mail or call the Willamette Writers Office.

If you are registering at the conference, let us know at that time. Although we will do our best to accommodate you, we may not be able to accommodate special needs we do not know about in advance.

General

What if I have a question or problem?

Please go to our Information tables located in the Main Lobby or Mt. Hood Foyer near our registration desk for general questions and information. For consult questions or problems, please go to the consult desk. For all other questions, please go to the registration desk.

Attending workshops

You can attend any workshop on the schedule; you don't need to pre-register or sign up. Classes are only limited by room size, so come early. If you're attending a workshop you decide isn't for you, you can get up and leave and go to another workshop. Please try not to disturb other participants as you leave, and fill out and leave the feedback form. If you have a consult scheduled during a workshop, please sit toward the door so your exit doesn't disturb others. Complete and leave the feedback form when you leave.

