

Collection-Ready Checklist

Your First Steps Toward Compiling a Poetry, Essay, or Story Collection

(Also functions as an exercise in reflection, self-evaluation, and early feedback gathering)

1. I Have a Folder for My Work

- ☐ I created a dedicated folder (physical or digital) for my collection
- ☐ I started adding all my past work—poems, essays, stories, drafts
- ☐ I included even incomplete or experimental pieces for future review
- ☐ I noted where each piece originally came from (journal, blog, etc.)

2. My Work Exists in Digital Form

- ☐ All pieces are saved in editable formats (.docx, Google Docs, etc.)
- ☐ I scanned handwritten work or typed it up for clarity and access
- ☐ File names or titles help me quickly identify and group related pieces
- ☐ I backed up my files on a cloud drive or external storage

3. I've Done a Gentle Read-Through

- ☐ I read through each piece without harsh judgment or revision
- ☐ I noticed recurring themes, imagery, or emotional threads
- ☐ I highlighted pieces that still feel strong, even after time has passed
- ☐ I left short reflection notes (e.g., “needs work,” “potential opener,” “feels dated”)
- ☐ I asked a trusted friend or reader for broad, non-invasive impressions

4. I Know What Kind of Collection I'm Making

- ☐ Poetry, Essays, Flash Fiction, Memoir, Mixed Genre—I've decided (or am narrowing it down)
- ☐ I have a rough sense of tone, structure, or emotional throughline
- ☐ I started grouping pieces thematically, chronologically, or intuitively
- ☐ I'm experimenting with different possible sequences or formats

- ☐ I asked a reader or mentor what kind of collection they see emerging

5. I'm Ready to Ask for Help

- ☐ I'm considering working with an editor, mentor, or creative consultant
- ☐ I want constructive feedback—not just praise or criticism, but insight
- ☐ I've reached out or scheduled a consultation to get a professional opinion
- ☐ I've asked for input on the overall arc or balance of the collection
- ☐ I'm preparing a few sample pages to present clearly and confidently

6. I Have an Idea for a General Structure

- ☐ I am 80 percent confident about the current structure or sequence
- ☐ I'm deciding between two (or more) arrangements and want guidance
- ☐ I've made notes on how the structure supports theme or pacing
- ☐ I've tested how the collection flows emotionally from beginning to end
- ☐ I've received feedback on the structure's clarity and impact