



Nicola Morgan's School Event Guidelines

I want my event for you to be seamless, fascinating and whatever you hoped when you booked me. I want the day to feel great for you, your pupils and me. You might be thinking, "Why does it matter how Nicola feels? We're paying her - can't she just take what comes?" Well, yes, I will take what comes, without showing that I'm uncomfortable, but the thing is this: I aim to give

my best performance every time, for the sake of your pupils, and I know the things that can make a subtle difference. I also think it makes it easier for *you* if you know what I need; then you can relax, knowing that the event will be sparkly, exciting and exactly what you booked me for.

NB This is for my events and written from my personal viewpoint. Don't assume every author will need the same, but ask them: you might be surprised how many do!

IN ADVANCE

- **Ensure pupils know** who I am, so they arrive with expectations and we can jump straight in.
 - Perhaps they could look at my website and find facts.
 - It's good if they prepare questions – it helps make the event their own.
- **Make sure relevant staff know** about my visit and my work. That increases value as staff can follow up and use any handouts I've sent. English departments should be involved in a fiction talk and PSHE/Wellbeing/Guidance in a teenage brain/stress talk.
- **Agree exact time-table details** with me. If part of the allotted time is likely to be taken by pupils arriving and settling down, tell me in advance, so I can prepare the material perfectly.
- **If we've agreed that I'm using Powerpoint**, make sure the equipment works! A tech expert should be on hand. I'll bring my Mac laptop and VGA lead, and am skilled at setting this up, but I won't have a clue how to fix your projector...
- **If we're having bookselling**, please ensure that pupils are told (often!) that they need money. Pupils *often* want to buy a book but *very* often don't bring money. The letter that you carefully wrote may not have reached them or they may have forgotten. If bookselling goes wrong because it hasn't been promoted well beforehand, it's upsetting – and costly when I've paid for the books. Sometimes, you'll do everything right and the message still won't get through, of course...
- Tell me well in advance **if a pupil might be upset** at certain themes because of a recent personal tragedy. For example, maternal death features in *Fleshmarket* and *Wasted*. However, those novels form the most interesting parts of my fiction talks, so I can't avoid them completely!
- **Print out any handouts** that we've discussed.
- **Make sure no one will be filming or recording** the event. (See note below.)
- **Let me know any plans for lunch (if applicable)**, so I know whether to bring food.

ON THE DAY

- **Introduce me at the start of each talk.** A lively introduction makes a *huge* difference, so that the pupils are excited – and flattery helps, because it brings energy to both the pupils and me! You will

find details on the [About](#) page on my website and there's even a ready-made paragraph if you want to use that. But feel free to say other (true!) things.

- Provide **water** and a **smallish table** (desk height, not a low table) for me to put things on.
- Give me a few minutes **on my own** before each talk. I do not get nervous but I need to go over in my head how I'm about to start the event.
- **Bookselling (if we have agreed this):**
 - Please supply a table and chair for me to sign at.
 - Ensure that pupils don't crowd round (I've been knocked off my chair like that!) and that pupils buying books have priority over those wanting bits of paper signed.
 - If I'm supplying books myself, I'll bring a float but I need someone (an adult or two responsible pupils) to handle the actual selling while I sign.
- **Photographs:** I'm happy to have photos taken (well, not happy exactly...) after/between events but **not during**. Please make sure that **pupils never record or film** the talk or any part of it. I don't mind having selfies taken with pupils at the end.
- **Refreshment and breaks*:** My talks are energy-intense and afterwards my blood sugar will dive. I have very simple requirements but I **do** need time to myself at some point. I am delighted to be sent out to get a sandwich at lunch, or for you to give me a plate of food in the staff-room and time to gather my thoughts for the next event. Please do not feel that you need to entertain me. I'm an introvert (which does NOT mean I'm shy; far from it – just that conversation and social interaction tax my brain more than for extroverts) and I need recovery time between events. Of course, it's lovely when other members of staff and management want to meet me and chat – and I can happily chat for Britain – but *please* make sure I get chill-out time as well, especially immediately before an event, otherwise the talk won't be as good. **In short, my only needs are: a sandwich (eg), something to drink and a bit of time on my own.**
 - I have no food allergies or special requirements but was once given a raw onion sandwich at a school event and now feel the bizarre need to request NO raw onion. Thank you!

(*Lots of authors feel the same about the need for peace and may not tell you but I've decided it's so crucial to my wellbeing and performance that I need to make a big point of it! ☺)

PLEASE DON'T:

- **Suddenly ask me to “pop into this class and talk to them”** if we haven't agreed this in advance.
- **Feel that you have to entertain me.** Have I already said that?!
- **Give me cake.** I'm not joking! I really don't like it. But I DO have a bit of sugar in my coffee...
- **Leave me alone with pupils** – this is a condition of my Public Liability insurance.
- **Record or film my talk** – following Society of Authors guidelines and my common sense, I don't allow filming or recording of a whole event but I don't mind if (*by prior arrangement*) you film or record *a small part*. I'd need to know what you want to record and your planned use of it. If pupils wish to record an interview, separately, this is absolutely fine. (By prior arrangement.)
- **Worry if pupils are a bit “lively”.** I want them to enjoy the event and my tolerance is fairly high, so I prefer to deal with low-level silliness myself. I have tactics, including a usefully piercing glare!
- **Worry about anything.** If you've done everything on this sheet, it's going to be a great day.

If there's anything you're not sure of, please ask. I very much look forward to working with you and providing an inspiring event for your pupils.

Nicola Morgan