

How To Write A Novel

Before starting the exciting journey of writing a novel, check the true level of your enthusiasm. In an informal survey of writers, the "why are you considering writing a novel" factor strongly affects the success of completing the "how to write" factor. On average, writing a novel is a 2+ year task, which requires a strong positive attitude that you'll not only start the novel but you'll also have the drive, passion, and belief in yourself and the project to see that adventure through to completion. Your motivation must be very strong -- always thinking of interesting plots, characters or things you want to write about, as if you can't help yourself; longing to put everything down on paper or computer screen. Bridging the gap between thinking and writing is as much an artistic adventure as the finished manuscript. If novel-writing isn't near the top of your life goals or objectives list, perhaps you need to reconsider the size of your writing project (change to short stories or articles) or investigate honing separate skill sets necessary to novel writing (plot formation, character development, dialogue and setting). Learning novel-writing is a process, so there's nothing wrong about starting in increments and building small success upon small success. Taking the task in manageable chunks, with your goal of a novel in mind, brings confidence and possible pages ready to be incorporated in the final product -- your novel. In gaining information about learning the craft of novel-writing, not every author, article or writing class will benefit you, just like everyone doesn't like every type of food. But they do have the advantage of "getting published," so accept and discard advice advisedly. You're still the amateur. Fortunately, the Internet, libraries, bookstores and writing groups are no-cost or low cost sources of gathering useful information which can help, or convince you, of proper technique in your efforts to learn (or get back on the right track) in your writing. Authors need a clear idea of their story as a foundation for their task. Do you know what you want to write about? What genres do you read or do you have favorite authors? Although you are not limited by your answers nor should you slavishly "mimic" another author's style, your responses might help you identify or hone your original idea to begin the process. Before starting, determine the "success" quotient of the idea for your novel. It must interest you, in order for you to spend the time and effort to write well, but, most importantly, it must be able to interest others, in a fresh, entertaining way. Always keep in mind, there's a lot of competition out there for a reader's time. The adversaries are the quality and availability of the 24/7 stories in broadcast and cable television and Internet as well as print media. So you have to craft the idea well and carefully; the potential reader of your novel is very busy and very sophisticated. Ask people who aren't "yes men" for a critical analysis of your idea to ascertain if the idea is clear, manageable and gripping. Now, the plot plan is next as you try to think of mixing the characters, settings and situations into a pace that will keep your reader entertained and entwined with your characters; wanting to turn the page or not wanting to turn the nightlight out before bed. Like an extension ladder whose rungs allow the worker to climb in incremental steps, the plot and subplots, must, overall, direct the reader in a cogent path to the last sentence. In real estate where the watchword is location, location, location, the other necessary part inherent the best plot plan is conflict, conflict, conflict; by which the reader is able to see and experience the change in the characters and situations. With so many other books on the shelf or manuscripts begging to be published, what attributes set your plot plan above the rest? With the idea in the forefront, a writer turns attention to time span, setting and characters. The writer has the final say, of course, but for the first effort consider things you already know in your work, pastimes or hobbies because you must be completely knowledgeable in these areas. Research, especially time span and setting, are crucial in determining the accuracy of your writing which cascades into your plot, dialogue and believability of the characters themselves. Be expert without being boring, redundant or preachy. Accuracy in your research flows into the writing, which gains the trust of the reader; proving your words have the same beauty and excitement as watching a professional musician, athlete or actor. Setting a schedule to gain information on how to write and actively writing are two more critical action steps. Perhaps you can't write every day but commit to a realistic number of hours per week, if you are not enrolled in a writing class. A "learning" writer is just like anyone trying to become skilled at a profession or craft -- it takes time, effort and sweat. "Birthing" each page, scene or chapter may be painstaking, but writers have to be willing to be tough on their work, but not too tough. Again, show your work to trusted critics, writing group members or editors, if you can afford them. Give close attention to their critiques and carefully gauge the consistent areas they feel you need work. Polish those, so you can stop problem areas before they become unfortunate habits. Judicious "sculpting" early makes things easier in the long run and impresses editors and publishers as well. Writing can be anything in-between a lonely landscape of you and a white page getting larger and larger in its blankness or the sheer joy of words flying from your ideas faster than you can get them down. Care, preparation, a clear idea and plot plan can help push things into the latter category. Don't get discouraged. Good luck. Copyright © 2007 Donna Grisanti

About the Author

In *Only a Promise of Happiness*, Alexander Nehamas reclaims beauty from its. Beauty, Nehamas concludes, may depend on appearance, but this does not make.

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