

TOP TIPS FOR FICTION WRITERS

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1. Write what you LOVE, what you like to read, what you are interested in and know something about.
2. CONFLICT is at the heart of every good story, external and/or internal. The challenges created by this conflict should shape your characters, leaving them forever changed.
3. You must HOOK your readers in the first few paragraphs of the first chapter to keep them interested.
4. Ground your fiction in REALITY to make it believable - real places, history, events. Do your RESEARCH.
5. SETTING is important. PLACE can become a character in itself, drawing people to want to visit the places where you set your novel, and establishing a fan base at those locations.
6. Keep your PLOT moving to keep your readers engaged. Something should happen in each scene or chapter to advance the plot. Try writing scene by scene, letting the plot unfold as you progress.
7. Create “CHARACTER PROFILES” for your main characters before you begin writing, characters that your audience will be able to identify with. Make sure that you include their goals, conflicts, strengths as well as weaknesses, and their backstory. Get into their heads as you begin to write. Use internal dialogue. Remember that even bad guys have some good characteristics and usually a back story that helps to explain their behavior. (Sample Character Profile sheet attached.)
8. LISTEN to your characters if and when they become “alive” and begin to take over your story. It happens and usually ends up enhancing your story!

- 9. Use DIALOGUE to reveal individual personalities, backgrounds and characteristics. This also helps readers identify who is speaking.**
- 10. Be FLEXIBLE as you write and feel free to deviate from your original plot and story line. Let the story evolve, twist and turn as your creative juices flow and you learn more about your characters and their situations.**
- 11. FEEDBACK is essential and very helpful in improving your story. Join writers' groups and participate in online groups. Always use at least several beta writers who are willing to give you constructive feedback. In the end, however, it is YOUR story and you need to tell it your way.**
- 12. EDIT, EDIT, EDIT!!**
- 13. Feel free to BREAK THE RULES (genre guidelines, voice, etc.) if it helps to enhance your story.**
- 14. Never quit LEARNING! Attend writers conferences. Join writers groups. Subscribe to magazines like Writers' Digest and The Writer.**
- 15. BELIEVE in yourself and follow your dreams! YOU CAN DO IT!**