

Helpful Books for Writers

On Writing by Stephen King

- At once a memoir of the craft and a how-to book, *On Writing* is one of the best resources available for both the unpublished writer and the established veteran. Covers everything from plot and character, to finding time to write, to dealing with writer's block. A must-read.

How to Write and Sell your First Novel, by Oscar Collier, with Frances Spatz Leighton

- From the moment you've had that first spark of interest, to the moment you see your book in the store, this book takes you on a crash course through the business of writing. A great primer on how to approach the industry – finding an agent, working with an editor, dealing with contracts, etc. Vital to serious writers who understand that most bestsellers are the result of dedication to creative business principals, not just a whim of imagination.

Plot and Structure, by James Scott Bell

- A trim and direct discussion of the basic principals of plot building – essential for writers of commercial fiction. Focuses on “page-turner” techniques and plot points that will get you noticed. Easy format, easy to read.

Writing the Breakout Novel, by Donald Maass

- One of my all-time favorite books. Targets mid-list, established writers, but is essential to new writers as well. Dissects strategies of characterization, conflict, setting, and more – and how those strategies function in familiar, tried-and-true novels. Geared more toward writers of commercial and mainstream fiction than writers of high literature.

Building the Career Novelist, by Donald Maass

- This book functions on two levels: 1) It's a primer for anyone who isn't already in the business – it's full of industry jargon and insider information, 2) It leads you through the thinking and planning that will help establish a career in writing, as opposed to a hobby. Other topics include mid-list death and successful branding. Again, speaks more to writers of commercial and mainstream fiction, but is applicable to anyone who wants writing to be their next nine-to-five.

Self-Editing for Fiction Writers, by Rennie Browne & Dave King

- Essential, essential, essential. If professional feedback suggests that your writing just doesn't "sparkle," or if you're tired of hearing "it just didn't grab me," then this is the book for you. A vital, critical and strategic guide to making every single word count. Teaches you how creative deleting can yield a tighter, more efficient read. Many writers I've worked with don't think they need this book until they actually read it.

Guerrilla Marketing for Writers, by Levinson, Frishman, & Larsen

- If you're a new writer, your publishing house probably isn't going to put any real money or muscle into publicizing your book. This book suggests creative and often economic ways to market and publicize your book. Particularly great read for self-published writers.

Turning Life into Fiction, Robin Hemley

- How to make your real life experiences translate into fiction – which often means coloring and shading the truth in order to make it more "truthful" on paper. Comments on journaling and writing about real people in your life.

Writing with Power, Peter Elbow

- An exploration not of writing, but of the writing process. Elbow tackles writer's block and other creative obstacles by breaking down the writing process into two parts: one creative and generative (free-writing), the other critical and prescriptive (editing). Academic and theoretical, the book is fantastic for anyone fascinated with the creative process. But to others, it may be a bit dry. For writers of fiction, creative non-fiction, academic non-fiction, and business writing.

-- By: Lisa Van Auken