

How to Grow Your Fiction Writing Skills

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I have been writing fiction since 1995 and in the beginning had almost no clue about how to become a better writer. As a result, I floundered and wasted many years. Here are some lessons I learned about improving writing skills. Perhaps this will help you save years of effort.

A. Learn some writing basics

1. Take some creative writing classes.
 - a. Many community colleges and adult learning centers have short classes for beginners. Participation in a class will jump start your learning, provide some discipline in doing writing as homework, and allow you to compare your skills with other writers in a supportive environment.
 - b. Classes can help by forcing you to focus on lessons. Classes are also good because they enable you to afford some time in front of a mentor/teacher for some personal attention on your skills.
 - c. Look for classes taught by writers who have sold fiction. It is better to learn from those who have succeeded in the marketplace.
2. Read a few books on writing fiction.
 - a. Resist the temptation to buy every book in the store, thinking that you will read them all and THEN you will know everything. There are too many books and some are not good.
 - b. Get books on major writing skills, for example, creating memorable characters, hooks on opening, plotting, dialogue, characterization, emotion, external conflict (between people or people versus nature), internal conflict (inside the character), and others. Try a few books at first. Later, as you become more knowledgeable, you will be ready to digest more.
 - c. After you have written more and have learned more about writing skills, you will become a better judge of books on writing. Most writers end up with a bookshelf crammed full of books on writing, and have not read most of them.