

You Can Write—Really!
A Beginner's Guide to
Writing Fiction

By Kelli A. Wilkins

www.KelliWilkins.com

Have you always wanted to write?

**Are you looking for an extra boost of
motivation?**

**Do you have a great story idea, but don't
know how to develop it?**

If you've always dreamed of writing and getting published, but have no idea where or how to start—THIS is the book for you!

You Can Write—Really! is an easy guide designed for beginner writers who need a boost of motivation and simple instructions on how to get started.

Award-winning author Kelli A. Wilkins takes you step-by-step through the writing process, covering the basics of plotting, editing, revising, and submitting. She explores ways to get your creativity flowing, explains where authors get ideas, and shows you how to create interesting characters for your story.

Helpful tips and fun writing exercises throughout the book get you motivated!

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Romances by Kelli A. Wilkins

*A Deceptive Match**
*A Secret Match**
*A Most Unusual Princess***
*A Most Intriguing Temptation***
*A Most Unfortunate Prince***
Beauty & the Bigfoot
Confessions of a Vampire's Lover
Dangerous Indenture
Four Days with Jack
Killer in Wolf's Clothing
Lies, Love & Redemption
Loving a Wild Stranger
*Midsummer Night's Delights****
*Midwinter Night's Delights****
Trust with Hearts
*Ultimate Night's Delights****
The Viking's Witch

* *A Deceptive Match* and *A Secret Match* are related titles with shared characters. However, each novel can be read separately.

** These titles make up the *Royal Desires* series. Although connected, each book stands alone as an individual read.

*** These novellas complete the *Naughty Nobles* trilogy. It is recommended that they are read in sequence.

Visit Kelli's website: www.KelliWilkins.com for additional titles as they become available.

Kelli's horror fiction appears in these anthologies

The Best of the First Line: The First 3 Years

The Big Bad Anthology of Evil

Dark Eclipse #18

Dark Moon Digest #1

Dark Things II: Cat Crimes

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Frightmares: A Fistful of Flash Fiction

Haunted: An Anthology of the Supernatural

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Moon Shadows

Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine #14

What If...

Wrapped in White

Don't miss Kelli's self-published horror shorts:

Kropsy's Curse and ***Dead Til Dawn***.

Visit her website: www.KelliWilkins.com for additional titles as they become available

Introduction

Welcome to *You Can Write—Really! A Beginner's Guide to Writing Fiction*. Before we get started, let me share a bit about myself. I'm a writer, and that means I write everything—short horror fiction, full-length romance novels, science fiction, and non-fiction. I'm often asked, “How can you write in so many different genres and styles?”

It's not really that difficult. Why? Because the basic mechanics of good storytelling are universal, no matter what genre you write. Every fiction story contains the same elements: an interesting and engaging plot, characters the reader cares about and roots for, and supporting details that draw the reader into the story.

This book walks you through the story-creating process step-by-step: getting a great idea, meeting your characters, developing a plot, and then on to writing, revising, and submitting your work.

Each chapter is based on my experiences as a writer, advice I've received over the years, and practical knowledge I've gained in writing classes and workshops. I'll also answer a few questions I'm commonly asked, such as: “Where do you get ideas?” “How do you create characters?” “How do I get published?”

Now that you know what the book is about, let me tell you what it *isn't* about—all that “stuff” you learned (or were supposed to have learned) in English class. I won't give you lessons or lectures on direct objects, past participles, or modifiers. But since you are interested in writing, I'll presume you have a good grasp of the English language, can identify a verb, and you know how to write a sentence. From there, I'll show you how to take your story idea and transform it into a finished product.

Along the way, I've included helpful tips and fun writing exercises. These are designed to get you thinking and writing. Don't be afraid to put down the device you're reading this on, pick up a pen, and start writing.

Throughout the book, I refer to whatever you are writing as “your story” because it is “your” story—and nobody else will ever tell it the way you do. And it doesn't matter if you're writing a short story, a novella, or a novel in any genre—the writing process is the same.

Creative writing (whether you do it for yourself or for the goal of getting published) is a lot of fun. It's an exciting feeling to write a story and share it with others, so if you're ready, we'll get started!

PART 1: BEFORE WE BEGIN

Part One is a short and sweet section designed to get you thinking about writing. (Yes, thinking!) We'll explore the questions: *What* do you want to write? *Why* do you want to write? Why *aren't* you writing?

We'll also take a look at how you can get into a writing "zone" and clear your mind to make room for the story, the characters, and the plot that will (hopefully) soon be coming your way.

Ready? Let's go!

Chapter 1: Meet the Muse

The Creative Process...

Do you ever wonder where short stories, novels, and plays come from? Think about it for a minute. Every writer (or anyone who wants to write) starts out with a clean piece of paper in a notebook or a blank computer screen. Somehow (magically?) the writer gets words from somewhere and fills the page with exciting and fascinating stories.

Every book (or anything, really) you've ever read started out from an empty space. So where did the author get the words? How did he or she make a story from nothing?

Interviewers often ask me, "Do you have a writing muse who gives you inspiration?" Each time I'm asked, I envision an ethereal creature like an elf or a fairy with a wand, carrying a notebook and a pen. (I haven't seen any of these beings around, but if magic elves want to help me edit, it would make my life easier.) I admit, no, I don't have a muse who touches me on the shoulder with a magic wand and ZAP, I suddenly have a fantastic story and all the motivation and time in the world to write it.

However, over the years I've realized there is something mysterious about the creative process. You

can cultivate an atmosphere that inspires your writing—or at least gets you started.

Getting in a Zone

Stories are created from (or are harvested from) a quiet stillness. In a way, it's almost like meditating or channeling. To get into this “story creating zone” you need to sit still in a comfortable place with no distractions (including people, phones, and other devices), calm your breathing, and empty your mind. Don't think about anything in particular, like the laundry waiting to be put away, or if you fed the dog, and don't force yourself to “not think” either.

Within a few minutes, random thoughts should start coming through. Don't try to figure them out or dismiss them as ridiculous or silly. Pay attention to them. You may think of a name for a character or see a person in your mind's eye. Don't worry if this sounds crazy. Clearing your mind and letting your imagination run free is a good way to prep for a writing session.

When you do this, keep a pen and paper handy to take notes. (Or record your ideas and impressions on your phone or on a voice recorder.) Don't make the mistake of thinking you'll remember the story idea and write it down later. Trust me, these fleeting thoughts don't stick around long. You have to capture the kernel of a story or a bit of dialogue the moment it comes

through and write it down, or it will vanish into the ether again.

After you have opened yourself to this “realm” you may be inspired to write a story based on an event you saw or imagined. Great! But if nothing came through, don’t worry. Keep trying. Focusing your mind takes practice if you’re used to being bombarded with distractions.

When I sit down to write, I spend a few minutes centering myself and tuning my mind into the story by connecting with the characters. Once I’m in that world, I can stay in that world and write for hours.

TIP: *When you’re in the writing zone, don’t think about what to write, write whatever pops into your head. And don’t worry about spelling or grammar—this is just for fun!*

Writing Exercises

I’ve included writing exercises throughout the book to motivate you and inspire you to write. After you finish reading a section or a chapter, sit somewhere quiet, center yourself, grab a pen, and write for fifteen minutes or so. You can do these exercises at home, after work, on your lunch break, or whenever you have free time.

Paper & Pen

Most people are surprised to learn that I write everything in longhand with pen and paper. Why do I write this way? I think it helps me connect to my creative side and liberates me to write freely. After my rough draft is done, I type it up, set it aside for a week or so, and then start editing.

If you type a lot for your day job, your mind might associate typing with “work” even when you’re writing a story. Writing with a pen on paper breaks away from the formality of typing and lets the creative side of your brain run free. If you’re not used to writing by hand, it’s a good way to increase your hand/mind connection. Try it as you complete the writing exercises in the book and see if you like it.

Why Write?

Why do you want to write? Have you ever asked yourself why writing is important to you? If not, it’s time to think about it. People want to write for many reasons—for personal expression, for fun, to see their name in print, or to tell the stories in their head.

Think about why you want to write. Would you still write even if nobody else ever read your story? If you never got paid? Are you willing to give up your free time

to write? Will you commit to writing for at least an hour every day?

EXERCISE 1: This quick and easy exercise will get you writing. Write: “Today I am...” or “Yesterday, I...” then finish the sentence with anything that pops into your head. It could be a thought, an emotion, or an idea. Here are a few examples: “Today I am depressed because it’s raining and I want the sun to come out.” “Today I am thinking of ideas for a detective story.” “Yesterday I went to the store and bought milk.” As you start writing, your mind will open up and words will start to flow. (This is called freewriting and we’ll explore it more in the “Ideas” chapter.)

EXERCISE 2: Write three to five paragraphs explaining why you want to write. What do you think writing will do for you? Do you want to write for yourself as a hobby? Do you want to write so you can get published? Perhaps turn writing into a professional career? Is your goal to make money or to achieve fame? Do you want to write because you have ideas and plots swirling around in your head that you have to get on paper? Or maybe you want to write because it’s fun to make up stuff. Start the exercise with: “I want to write because...” and go from there.

What to Write?

What do you want to write? Novels? Short stories? Novellas? What genre? Many people tell beginning writers to “write what you know.” This means you should write about things you are familiar with, know about, and are interested in. If your hobby is collecting stamps, you could write a story where one of your characters is a stamp collector. If you live on a ranch in rural Wyoming and write a romance novel, you could set it on a ranch.

I’ve never been one to “write what I know.” I’m more the type to “write the story in my head.” I get lots of ideas all the time and they run the gamut of things I know about firsthand, things I’ve read about, or stuff way out there and totally off my grid. Basically, I write what comes to me (in whatever genre), and I don’t worry about “what I know.” I do research to learn what I need in order to write a story. (We’ll talk more about research later.)

However, it is a good idea to write what you like to read. If you love horror short stories and have ideas for your own terrifying tales, write them. If you’re a historical romance novel fan and want to write a romance set in 1830 England, go right ahead. But if you don’t like romances because you think they’re hokey, you probably shouldn’t write one. I write horror, but I don’t write zombie stories. Why not? Because zombies

don't interest me. They're not my thing, so I leave the zombie world to others.

Many writers try to jump on the bandwagon and write a novel or short story because a particular genre, types of characters, or a certain plot is extremely popular and readers are snatching up books about that subject.

Let's use vampires as an example. For a while, vamps were everywhere: on TV shows, starring in movies, appearing in all kinds of fiction (young adult, horror, science fiction, and romance). It seemed that every time you turned around, there was another vampire lurking somewhere.

Before you join the crowd and write a vampire tale, stop and consider a few things. One, how unique is your idea? Is it interesting and different enough so that it's not a rehash of everything already done in the vampire subgenre? Two, would your story interest an editor who has read thousands of vampire stories and might be sick of them? And three, is the market saturated? What happens if the vampire craze ends before your story gets published? You don't want to put all your effort into a novel and then hear: "Vampires? Ugh. They're so done. Nobody wants to read about *them* anymore."

Although you might be told to write what you know, it's better to write what you like. After all, you'll be

living with your short story or novel for a while, and you won't want to write it if you're not excited about it.

EXERCISE 3: What do you want to write? Take a few minutes and think about the types of stories you like to read. Odds are, you'll start writing in the same genre you read. Do you love cozy mysteries? Hardboiled detective stories? Thrillers set in exotic locations? Novels about lawyers or spies? Do you want to start with a short story or jump in and try a full-length novel? (If you only read short stories because novels are "too long" to sit through, the answer should be obvious.) Make a list of what you like to read and what you want to write.

Do you know what you want to write? Good. Next, we'll look at the reasons why people give up on their dream of writing before they even get started.

Ready to write? Order your copy of *You Can Write—Really!* here:

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About the Author

Kelli A. Wilkins is an award-winning author who has published more than 100 short stories, 19 romance novels, and 5 non-fiction books. Her romances span many genres and heat levels.

Her paranormal-comedy, ***Beauty & the Bigfoot***, was published in September 2017.

Kelli released ***Trust with Hearts***, a contemporary romance, in July 2017. Her third gay romance, ***Four Days with Jack***, was released in June 2017. Kelli's trilogy of erotic romance novellas, ***Midsummer Night's Delights***, ***Midwinter Night's Delights***, and ***Ultimate Night's Delights*** was published in spring 2017.

Loving a Wild Stranger was published in January 2017. This historical/pioneer romance is set in the wilds of the Michigan Territory and blends tender romance with adventure.

Kelli's third Medallion Press romance, ***Lies, Love & Redemption*** was released in September 2016. This spicy historical western is set on the Nebraska prairie in 1877.

Her writing book, ***You Can Write—Really! A Beginner's Guide to Writing Fiction*** is a fun and

informative guide filled with writing exercises and helpful tips all authors can use.

Kelli posts on her Facebook author page:
<https://www.facebook.com/AuthorKelliWilkins> and
Twitter: www.Twitter.com/KWilkinsauthor.

She also writes a weekly blog:
<http://kelliwilkinsauthor.blogspot.com/>

Visit her website, www.KelliWilkins.com to learn more about all of her writings, read book excerpts, reviews, and more. Readers can sign up for her newsletter here:
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Here are a few links to find Kelli & her writings on the web

Amazon Author Page:
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