



GETTING STARTED or On Your Mark, Get Set, GO!

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"How do I get started writing a book?"
"Where do I begin?" "Where can I get some help?"

Sound familiar? These are just some of the many questions beginning writers ask. But what *should* they do first? Here are some ideas to help lasso that story they have percolating within them and translate it into a marketable manuscript.

1. **READ.** Read as many current books as you can in the publishing line you are targeting. Write for the guidelines, if any. Make sure your idea fits the line. Study these books as if they were reference material.

What to look for: What did you like or dislike about the book? Why did certain scenes work and others didn't? What's the word length? Does the novel contain Point of View switches or is it mainly in the heroine's POV? How strong are the secondary characters? Is a subplot allowed? What's taboo for this line and what's not? For example, does the line demand explicit sex scenes or frown upon sex before marriage? And how are these scenes portrayed?

2. **PLOTTING.** Brainstorm to come up with a storyline that fits. If exotic

locales are required, scrub the idea of a small town romance. Be flexible and inventive. If you burn (!) to write a tale about Ancient Rome, but no historical publisher is interested, change it to have a paranormal/time travel slant. Plot your action according to the Writer's "W" Chart. Be sure to provide both convincing internal and external conflicts for your hero and heroine. What is keeping them apart and why? And how do they resolve their differences?

3. **CHARACTERIZATION.** How old and how experienced should your characters be? Is their behavior believable? Does your life-of-the-party guy suddenly prefer to stay home and read a philosophy book? Probably not, unless there is a **very** good reason for the switch. Keep your characters true-to-form by using books on determining personality types. Two excellent ones are: *Type Talk* by Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesen, and *Please Understand Me* by David Keirse and Marilyn Bates. Minor characters can be just as important as the major ones. Also recommended to help define your characters is Robert Newton Peck's book *Fiction Is Folks*.

Remember: Read, Plot, Plan, and then--**GET STARTED!**