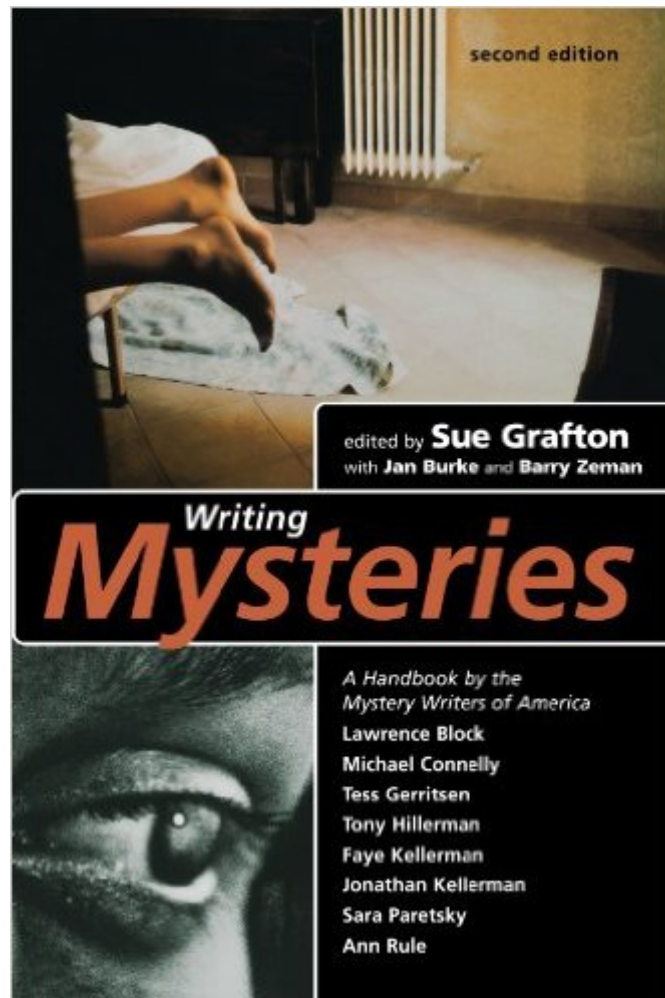


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# Writing Mysteries



## Synopsis

Here's your ticket to the greatest mystery-writing workshop ever! In this extraordinary compilation, more than three dozen members of the Mystery Writers of America share insights and advice that can help make your writing dreams a reality. You'll learn how to: Develop unique ideas Construct an airtight plot packed with intrigue and suspense Create compelling characters and atmospheric settings Develop a writing style all your own Write convincing dialogue Choose the appropriate point of view Work with an agent Conduct accurate research and much, much more! You'll also find special guidelines for creating clues, dropping red herrings, and writing medical, legal, historical, true crime, and young adult mysteries. It's all the information you need to solve the mystery-writing riddle!

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A favorite device of the Writer's Digest Books imprint is to collect a couple dozen magazine articles under some organizational headings, add an introduction by a well-known genre name (Sue Grafton, in this case), and publish it as a book. I've found these collections to be uniformly unsatisfying, short on real how-to information and long on shopworn cliches. *Writing Mysteries* is no exception. The biggest failing of *Writing Mysteries* is that, regardless of what the table of contents promises, it presents no real strategy for approaching the complex task of planning and writing a book-length manuscript. Many of the chapters were clearly written to fill magazine column space. They cover topics that have been covered elsewhere time after weary time, too often in an off-hand or precious manner, and they tend to give empty advice - where do you get ideas? anywhere; do you use an outline? sometimes; and on and on. Worse, many of the chapters are rambling and

poorly organized, and some deal only tangentially with the topic announced in the chapter title (or subheading). There are useful tips here, but you have to mine the whole mountain to find the nuggets. You'd do better to purchase a single-author, comprehensive guide to writing mysteries. You'll get those nuggets of writing wisdom, along with a lot more actual how-to information.

This is a kind of "anthology" reference book on writing modern mysteries for want-to-be authors. Everything from where to look for inspiration, building a good plot, mastering ambience and effective character and dialogue development is here. What is also here - and very much present - is, in fact, the influence of crime writers. For example, the first chapter discusses the general "rules" for writing a mystery. I find it too partial to the modern, American crime writers, depecting the use of violence, certain cities, etc.; as the optimal places to write mysteries about. Other writers, like Tony Hillerman, who writes mysteries about the Navajo indians, writes a kind of pedantic chapter, very much geared towards people like him, who are established writers; but that the novice can find discouraging. I find the most helpful, and best written chapter of all is one of the last ones, written by Ruth Gavin, a mystery editor; where she tells exactly what an editor is looking for in a mystery and what the readers are looking for as well. She definitely helps the first time writer to get published. I find the traditional, cozy or not, British mystery the most enticing, entertaining and relaxing. If you are this kind of writer, this book is not going to appeal much to you. Although I would still recommend you browse it, I suggest "You can write a mystery", by Gillian Roberts. On the other hand, if you are a Sue Grafton fan - who, by the way, is the editor of this book -, and you also like Tom Clancy and Robert Ludlum; you will find this volume very appealing.

Writing Mysteries, 2nd Ed.: A Handbook by the Mystery Writers of America Edited by Sue Grafton, with Jan Burke and Barry Zeman Writers Digest Books (2002) "Writing a novel is a long distance run of the imagination... Writers need all the help they can get, wherever they can get it..." (George C. Chesbro, p.91) So you want to write a mystery? There's a few things you'll need for your journey, among them a healthy dose of curiosity and imagination, but nothing so important as a well-worn copy of Writing Mysteries (2nd Ed.), written by the Mystery Writers of America. Everything you'll need is here, organized into just under 300 pages of collective wisdom, from well-known and not-so-well-known mystery authors. The handbook is divided into three parts: Preparation, The Process, and Specialties. Part I includes chapters on "The Rules and How to Bend Them," how and where writers get their ideas, the pros and cons of writing with a partner, and several chapters on research and background, all exploring different facets of these subjects. Part II, The Process, dives

right in to beginnings, middles, and endings, with specific sections focusing in-depth on characterization, creating a series character, using point of view, and developing one's personal writing style. Discussions on dialogue, pacing, and "clues, red herrings, and other plot devices" lead into the beginning of the end--thoughts and recommendations on plot, revision, agents, and markets. Part III, Specialities, contains separate and thorough chapters each detailing a particular type of mystery writing--writing short stories, for younger audiences, true crime, e-book mysteries, and even a list of additional recommended reading and references. So there you have it--everything you'll need to know to write a mystery--from the inkling of your first clue to the portrayal of the hero/sleuth your audiences will clamor to read about again and again. The best of the best are here--Jonathan and Faye Kellerman, Tony Hillerman, Michael Connelly, Stuart Kaminsky, Sara Paretsky, Joan Lowery Nixon, Lawrence Sanders, and a host of other unique voices to guide the beginning mystery writer on the journey from idea to publication. With humor and honesty, a varied assortment of very different writers share their thoughts and even some of their "trade secrets" in this excellent writer's resource. Every aspiring mystery writer should have a copy of *Writing Mysteries* within arm's reach.

Novice writers of this genre and those who just love to read mystery books will get a lot from this book. The essayists are all published writers of the genre who give expert advice with excellent examples to guide the reader toward better understanding.

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