

## All You Need is a Six-Pack!

By Anna Sugden

Baffled by the number of craft books out there? Bewildered by all the different workshops telling you how to write your book? Bothered that you're doing it wrong? This workshop will show you how to develop a writer's tool kit that works for you.

### **The best writing process is the one that works FOR YOU!**

#### What are you doing now?

- Plotters v Pantsers v Jigsaw-ers v Pick 'n Mixers
- The same process for each book or different?
- Craft books, workshops and writing advice, oh my!
- Are you scared you're doing it all wrong?

#### Relax, you're not alone

- Writers are all different - how we work, where we work, when we work etc
  - Processes can vary from writer to writer, from book to book
  - Growth as a writer involves discovering your process
  - AND letting your process grow, adapt, change!
  - Gives you the confidence and the tools to write, but doesn't guarantee what you write is good!
- <g>

#### The Writing Journey

- Writers are like travellers
- Pack what YOU need to get the most out of YOUR trip
- Experience changes how we travel and how we write

#### Books and workshops and advice, oh my!

- All are very useful - we need the experience from others
- Learn, learn, learn!
- Not all of it will resonate
- Listen to your gut - choose what's right FOR YOU
- Don't be a slave to one method. Don't be a slave to every method
- Writing isn't easy!

#### What is a six pack?

- The obvious! <g>
- YOUR tool-kit - what you use to help you write the best book you can.
- YOUR six key tools.
- Helps you be organised, gives you freedom to explore your story and confidence to write.
- Helps you revised, edit, evaluate and unblock your muse.
- Tools work for everyone (yes, even you pantsers!)

## What's in a six pack?

### 1. Character tool

- If we don't care about your characters, we won't care about the story.
- Build interesting, 3-d characters with depth that can show growth through the story. Greater growth means a more meaningful resolution and more satisfying happy ending.
- Characters who can react with and respond to each other, not just bicker constantly.
- Characters readers can identify with and empathise with (even the villain).
- Editors and agents look for strong characters!
- Eg Debra Dixon GMC charts, character interviews/bios, character information sheets, character grids, collages, enneagrams, archetypes

### 2. Plot Tool

- Build a sustainable, credible, multi-layered story that is appropriate to the characters
- Helps with story flow, pace and structure
- Helps demonstrate character growth and show issues and resolutions
- Ensures you don't have a stack of problems for the sake of it - escalating tension not bad luck!
- Strong story arcs - romance, suspense, secondary plots etc
- Also useful for revising and editing!
- Eg GMC, W-Plot, plot outlines, plotting grids, storyboards, spreadsheets, snowflakes, Plot Doctor, Hero's Journey, Story Magic, Break into Fiction, Michael Hague

### 3. Blurb

- Short, snappy way to give information about your story and characters
- Gives a way to check GMC, plot credibility and sustainability, romance
- Multi-purpose tool - pitches, website, query letter, back of book
- Summary of the key elements - essence of your story
- Panic-Free Pitching by Anna Sugden

### 4. Idea Generation

- What do you do when you're stuck or have painted yourself into a corner?
- Help with unexpected story twists or when you need to create those story twists/red herrings etc
- Helps with broad brush revisions, deepening plot/conflict/ character
- Helps when CP's nix your current ideas!
- Eg brainstorming, Mind Maps, collages, character interviews, sticky notes. (note: make sure you follow the rules of brainstorming!)

### 5. Research

- Romance is a huge market with knowledgeable readers - chances are one of them will know! Poor research turns off readers.
- Do most of it up-front - you can be distracted!
- Be accurate - ask experts - don't just rely on the internet - readers are/think they are experts.
- Use it to layer, add depth, add new facets
- Use sparingly, to add flavour - don't be a text-book!

### 6. Back-Story Dump

- Get it all out, so you don't dump it at the beginning of the book!
- Helps refine characters, story, GMC
- Helps with depth, layering and problems
- Efficient - don't have to stop to work it out!
- Eg character grids, mind maps, timelines, collage, write 'prequel'

### Summary

- It's okay to have your own process and that your process is different from other people's.
- Let your process grow, develop, adapt, change.
- Listen, read and learn - but, listen to your gut.
- Make sure you have the tools you need.
- Treat your tools with respect!
- Write! Write! Write!

### **Bio:**

Anna Sugden is a three-time Golden Heart finalist who has won numerous awards for her writing. She is a founder member of the Romance Bandits and a regular contributor to The Healthy Writer blog. She joined Romance Writers of America during her six years living in New Jersey. She currently resides in the UK.

Her background includes thirteen years in business, working in marketing for a major blue-chip multinational, and six years as a teacher.

You can find out more about Anna at [www.annasugden.com](http://www.annasugden.com) .

## Useful References

Kate Walker *12 Point Guide to Writing Romance*

Christopher Vogler *The Writer's Journey*

Mary Buckham and Dianna Love *Break Into Fiction*

Michael Hague *Writing Screenplays that Sell*

Blake Snyder *Save the Cat*

Albert Zuckerman *Writing the Blockbuster Novel*

Dwight Swain *Techniques of the Selling Writer*

Bob Mayer *The Novel Writer's Tool Kit*

Alfie Thompson *Lights! Camera! Fiction! - A Movie Lover's Guide to Writing a Novel*

Lawrence Block *Telling Lies for Fun and Profit*

Lawrence Block *Spider, Spin Me a Web - A Handbook for Fiction Writers*

Debra Dixon *Goal, Motivation and Conflict*

Donald Maas *Writing the Breakout Novel (Workbook)*

Alexandra Sokoloff *Screenwriting Tricks for Authors.*

Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson *The Wisdom of the Enneagram*

Tami Cowden et al *The Complete Writer's Guide to Heroes and Heroines Sixteen Master Archetypes)*

Renni Browne and Dave King *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*

Anne Lamott *Bird by Bird*

Stephen King *On Writing*

Also:

Carolyn Greene aka The Plot Doctor ([www.theplotdoctor.com](http://www.theplotdoctor.com))

Robin Perini and Laura Baker - Discovering Story Magic ([www.discoveringstorymagic.com](http://www.discoveringstorymagic.com))