

How to Write a Really Bad Romance vs *How to Write a Great Romance*

Plots to Put Your Readers to Sleep

Subplot Overshadows the Main Plot

Spend most of the story on how the characters try to overcome the villain, then at the end of the book, preferably after a huge break up, confess their love for one another. Or, spend as much time getting other characters together as you do getting the main characters together.

Instead, build your plot and sub plot accordingly. The main plot of a romance is the relationship between the two main characters—their journey into love. The other part of the story is subplot.

Cliché Equals Plot

Time-honored scenarios you often see done in the location where your book takes place.

Instead, do something unexpected, something not already done dozens of times.

Boring Beginnings

Begin in a boring and passive way, with either info dumps or a character alone and thinking.

Instead, start with a problem: a hook, some action, some witty dialogue. Better yet, start the story when disaster strikes or when the protagonist's life changes.

Instant Attraction/Love at First Sight

They've never met before but they're in love at first sight and will risk anything to be together.

Instead, let them discover something in common and fall in love naturally.

Bickering Equals Conflict

They fight constantly and then suddenly realize they love each other.

Instead, every word should push your story forward toward deepening the plot and heightening the conflict. Bickering is not conflict.

Misunderstanding Equals Conflict

Their misunderstanding takes the entire book to solve. Then they solve it with a little bit of honesty.

Instead, there needs to be true reasons—both internal and external—why they shouldn't be together. True conflict is what keeps them apart.

Happy Coincidences That Magically Solve Problems for the Hero and Heroine

You've written yourself into a corner and don't know how to solve the problem, so you have the police show up and save them.

Instead, write down the major plot points and make sure everything flows logically.

Manipulate the Plot to Suit Your Idea of What a Nice Scene Would Be

As they're running from a group of flesh-eating zombies, they get caught in the rain so they stop in a shed and declare their undying love and have a make out session.

Instead, events should follow a logical path. Would you be in that mood if you're terrified and freezing?

Characters that Make Readers Grind Their Teeth

Mirror, Mirror

The characters look in the mirror and take note of every feature in great detail, admitting they are beautiful.

Instead, give just a few casual mentions, preferably in a negative way, and let the reader fill in the blanks.

Characters acting out of character

Their background doesn't measure up to the amount of change required for their character in the plot.

Instead, filter every action through experience and background.

Unsympathetic Characters

She has no obvious redeeming qualities, but by the end of the book, will have saved everyone and fallen in love with the hero who loves her.

Instead, give the main characters some redeeming quality right from the start, even if they'll have a dramatic character arc.

The Shrew

The heroine is always mean to the hero but he comes back for more because he loves her spirit.

Instead, have him see something in her that he admires, and have tender moments where they connect.

Boring Characters

They're not particularly witty; they don't have dreams or flaws that set them apart from anyone else.

Instead, give them some quality that makes them interesting or out of the ordinary.

Characters Who are Victims of Their Emotions or Are Always Angry

Characters stomp, stalk, clench fists and glare at each other, exhibit no self-control or wallow in their own angst.

Instead make sure they feel many emotions—even joy once in a while.

Overly Persecuted Heroines

She has no friends, she's the butt of every cruel joke, her father beats her, and her brother loses her in a gambling game to another gambler for the night.

Instead make her less hopeless, wimpy, and victimized. Give her some strength, some free will, some backbone about something. Anything.

Overly Adored Heroines

Everyone is disgustingly enamored with your stunningly beautiful heroine. The hero loves her, and the villain is obsessed with her.

Instead have some like her, some dislike her, and others be indifferent. No one can relate to the overly adored heroine.

The Perfect Hero

He's a big, good-looking machine with no interesting flaws.

Instead, give your hero some layers that will make him more than just a chiseled hunk. Flaws make a character interesting.

The Brooding Hero

He's cold and unreachable yet there's something attractive about his stoic darkness.

Instead, give him another side to his personality that you SHOW the reader and the heroine.

TSTL Behavior

She does overly stupid and dangerous things for dubious reasons and then gets into trouble.

Instead, give her a really great reason for doing what she's doing or don't have her do it.

Inappropriate Emotional Response

The world is ending, the heroine's life is in dire jeopardy, and her response is "Wow, the hero has beautiful eyes."

Instead, think of the last time you faced some kind of crisis. What were you thinking about?

Hodge Podge Character Traits

She goes from being nurturing and patient, to a shrew who assumes the worst of everyone.

Instead, have interesting, multi-faceted characters with strengths and weaknesses.

Some Nuts and Bolts of Writing

Finish the Manuscript: 10% of those who wish to be writers finish a manuscript.

Make Time to Write: If you really want to be a writer, you have to make time.

Write with Passion: Fall in love with your characters and story.

Provide Satisfying endings: More than just I love you and HEA—conflict must be resolved.

Edit for Excellence: Be teachable and humble when you ask for help, and don't be lazy.

Be Persistent: If at first you don't get a contract, try, try again.

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