

# THE ROMANCE NOVEL FORMULA

## by Alicia Leigh

### EXCERPT

#### **Common Writing Mistakes**

The following details the writing errors I regularly come across in my role as an editor. Avoid these and you will stand out from the slush pile in your submissions with stronger writing. Of course, rules are meant to be broken, but do so with caution, as well as the knowledge of why you are breaking them.

#### **Show versus Tell**

This one is common. It is easy to write “Helen hated Clark.” However, it is more interesting and enticing to the reader if you write “Helen drew on every ounce of willpower she had to stop herself from glaring in Clark’s direction.” Notice the difference? In the second version, we can feel the hatred along with Helen.

#### **Active voice**

Passive writing is safe writing. This is why most beginning writers use it. To give your writing the oomph it deserves, switch to active voice as often as you can. As an example, passive voice: Nicole was running from the stranger. In the active voice, it would be: Nicole bolted from the stranger. Can you see the difference? Active voice makes it scarier and more immediate.

#### **Lapses in point of view**

Go through your manuscript and look for a consistent point of view. Have you dropped into third person (he, she, and it) when you should be in first (I and me)? Or does your story head hop? Head hopping occurs when you start off a scene writing from one character’s point of view then switch,

without warning, to another character's thoughts or feelings. Don't do this. It confuses the reader and is a telltale amateur mistake.

### **Clichés**

Delete all the clichés in your work as fast as a bat out of hell!

### **Adverbs**

Adverbs are those pesky words that end in "ly." They add nothing to your story (mostly). The general rule in writing is: Anything that doesn't add something needs to be cut. Get snipping.