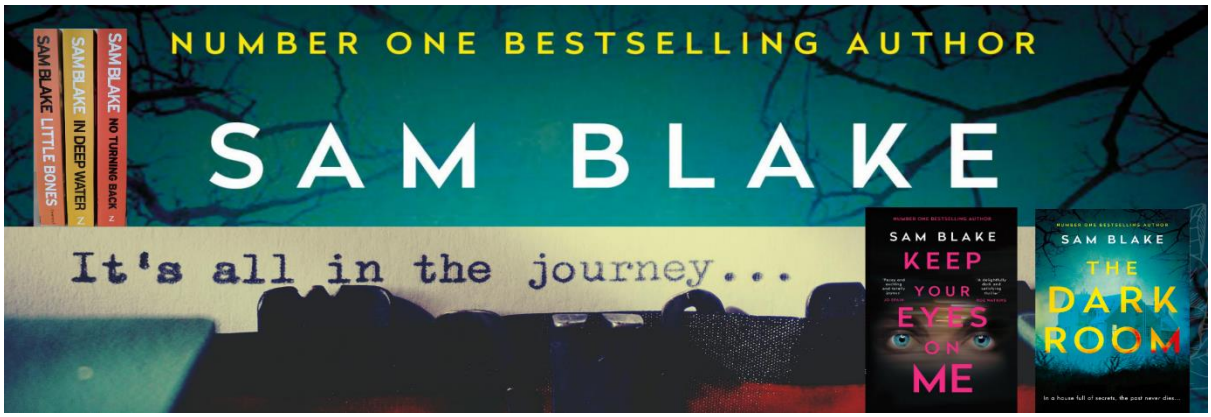


The Final Polish

Keep it simple *Vigorous writing is concise.* William Strunk Jr.

You don't need to prove that you have a MENSA level vocabulary – the best writing is the simplest, it reads as if no effort has gone into it at all. Focus on your story, not on complex or flowery language – 'don't let the words get in the way of the story'.

Write because you love writing – because you cannot live without it

Write without pay until somebody offers to pay ~Mark Twain

Most important of all ***enjoy writing***. If you have an idea that's burning, don't worry about the trend, about the market – get it written and enjoy the process. If you want to write, don't get caught up in worrying about trying to sell a book that isn't written. Just start writing.

View all criticism as constructive

This is essential - it might make you want to curl up inside or want to spit, but it's vital that you view all criticism as constructive. It might feel damning to begin with, but look for the positives, learn from every comment and improve with every comment. When you do get your publishing deal you will be working with an editor who will have lots of thoughts on your work – the ability to take editorial direction, to accept that someone else knows better, is a characteristic that publishers and agents look for in new writers. They don't have the energy to work with writers who are going to argue every point. If you feel strongly about an element of your story, stick your heels in, but otherwise remember that this is their area of expertise and you can learn a lot from them. If a reader has an issue with an element of your story, you may not agree with it, but it is still and issue and needs your careful consideration – why do they feel that way, how can you make it better?

Find your voice - write all the time

The more you write the better you get. It's a simple fact. Don't be disheartened if your first book is not the book that gets you published - look at it as an apprenticeship and make the second book that much better.

Everyone's writing voice is unique and it is the first thing a publisher looks for – a different voice. Voice is the way your write, just like we all sound differnent when we speak, our writing voices are all different, and a strong voice remain in the readers head, makes them bond with the writer. It takes time to find your own voice and the only way you will find it is to write in every spare minute until your confidence grows and your voice appears on the page as surely as if you were speaking the words.

Be original

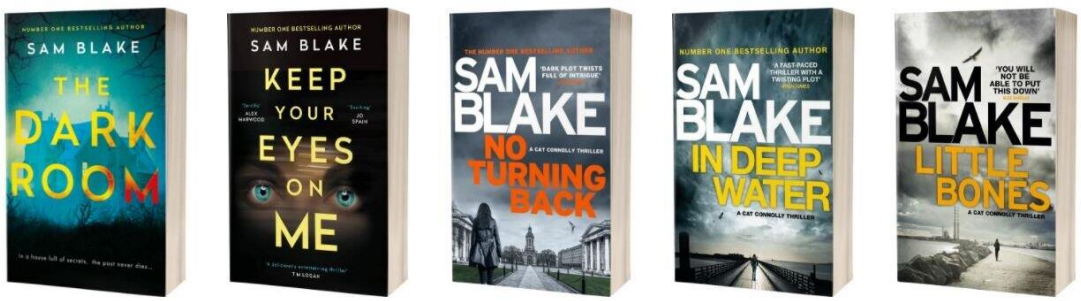
Publishers aren't looking for another Dan Brown or Cecelia Ahern, they are looking for an original voice and an original story. As Paul Carson pointed out at the Inkwell Crime Pays workshop, every story has already been written – in the Bible – but work on your story to give it a unique twist. Look for the unexpected.

Write with Passion

If you're excited about our writing, your reader will be too. If you're bored, why should they read on?

Eliminate unnecessary words, particularly qualifying words like seems, really, almost, well...

As Mark Twain said "Substitute "damn" every time you're inclined to write "very;" your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be."

Remember writing is re-writing, to quote Stephen King again, **"kill your darlings"** (but always save your changes in a DATED new draft so you can reclaim them again!)

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