



Novelist's Boot Camp: 101 Ways to Take Your Book From Boring to Bestseller

Todd A. Stone

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Take Command of Your Novel!

It's time to plan and execute a writing strategy that's in sync with your ultimate mission objective: getting published.

In *Novelist's Boot Camp*, author **Todd A. Stone**, a former assistant professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, draws on his experience as novelist, writing instructor, and military officer to help get you and your writing into tip-top shape.

This boot-camp-in-a-book includes 101 carefully crafted drills designed to show you how to:

Identify and develop story ideas with laser-like perception
Create realistic "alpha" characters who can take charge of any scene
Know what motivates your protagonist's enemy so that you can amp up the conflict
Outline your story to avoid sneak attacks from flawed plot twists
Dodge the land mines of bad writing like Deadly Modifier Buildup (DMBU)
Triage your scenes to ensure a thorough and precise revision process
Plus, there's a twelve-week boot camp battle plan that you can use to stay the course and finish your novel.

Novelist's Boot Camp provides you with all the ammunition you need to approach your work with dedication, confidence, and skill. Now, report for duty and start writing that bestseller!

Novelist's Boot Camp: 101 Ways to Take Your Book From Boring to Bestseller Details

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Suzie Quint says

I'm not sure why this book didn't click for me. I didn't care much for the format which includes a lot of bullet lists. Content-wise, the advice in the book isn't bad, but it's all pretty basic. Nothing I haven't seen elsewhere.

Jessie says

Pretty one-genre oriented. If you write mainstream fiction, this book is your kick in the shins. If you write Lit Fic.... it doesn't always present the best advice. This book promises that you'll have a novel written by the time you're done reading, but I bought this at least five years ago and all I got out of it was a character list. There is some good advice presented without, but not enough to really help a newbie or someone who doesn't know how to PUT those characters on the page in the first place.

Writers don't always need push ups (though it helps blood circulation). Some times they need thorough instructions with that slap in the face.

If you're reading this as a piece of fiction however, it is quite excellent.

Theresa says

At first glance, this book might seem kitschy. But look again, especially at the later part of the book, which is packed with useful drills and exercises. It's practical advice delivered in a fun and unique format.

Amy says

Could be a good resource for writers, but I had a hard time following it step by step. Guess I can only write my own way.

John says

I really liked the approach of this book for novel-writing helps. Each task is simple. The book has a fun style.

Chris says

As a beginning novelist with no prior experience and a lack of discipline, this book helped immensely. I was able to complete my first ever first draft! Awesome! Now on to editing...

J.D. says

I have a copy of this somewhere. I do remember it as being very useful. I'll have to see if I can find it and read it again.

Brian says

I'd have a more formed opinion if I hadn't been reading this since probably last November. It's done now, and it wasn't awful. Like a lot of books, I notice the typos creeping in toward the end. In this case just two or three in the whole book, but they're there nonetheless. My original theory was people would miss typos toward the end of the book as the plot takes over, but this is a lesson by lesson thing, there's honestly not what you'd call plot or momentum involved. So, looks like I need a more refined theory. That or a more basic theory - typos creep in toward the end of the book.

As to the actual book, I liked it fine, if you like prescriptive "do this" advice, it's got plenty of that, and if you read it while revising, the lessons also would apply pretty well.

--Brian.

Chris Swain says

Love the layout, simple tips.

Hunter says

I've taken a couple of the author's workshops based on the principles found in this book. Then I read the book.

As a woman (perhaps) I sometimes found the theme - bootcamp with military metaphors for the writing principles involved - sometimes a little wearying.

However, there are many principles within the book which have helped me get a grip with my own processes much quicker than other books (and courses have done) and which I have taken through with my own writing ever since. I particularly found the drafting and now the revision systems given helpful. For the later, Stone provides a 7 pass process for revision which makes easy work of it. Different learning and writing styles are catered for - we can choose from index card summaries, to using maps, spreadsheets, notebooks, scribbled manuscripts, whatever floats our boat. The main emphasis for writers is that writing is a process, and requires a little discipline to produce from those processes.

Linnea says

I'm halfway through this book and I can already tell it's exactly what I need. And I'm a published author (Bantam Dell). The beginning chapters are a bit basic (but hey, it's good to be reminded about what we **THINK** we know!) but once you get to the middle with Stone's charts and drills and lists--it's just great. Admittedly, I'm not an organized writer. I'm a pantser who's becoming a plotter under duress (ie: contracts and deadlines). Stone's unique military perspective on creating a novel (he's ex-Army Airborne and ex-West Point assistant professor) is super for writers like me. (I love his NO WHINING!)

I wouldn't suggest **BOOT CAMP** for someone who's thinking about writing a fiction novel but has yet to try. Read Dwight Swain's **TECHNIQUES OF THE SELLING WRITER** first. **BOOT CAMP** works well for the writer who already has a good idea of characters, plot and conflict--and may even have a first draft or several chapters done--and just doesn't know how to make the book better or where to go from there.

Stone is coming south to my local RWA chapter to do an in-person workshop in January. Can't wait for that. He teaches in a kilt, did you know?

Boingboing says

I'm saddened to write this review because I really wanted to like this book. I wanted this book to push me ahead, help me over the bar, give me information that, while not new, it was still written in such a way as to invigorate me and urge me forward. I was in love with the idea that if I wrote along with this book every day/week (as suggested in the appendix), that at the end of it, I would have a finished draft.

Novelist's Boot Camp really let me down.

It's ordered by Missions and Drills. Each Mission has several Drills within it. Each Drill is, unfortunately, nothing more than a blog article, information written in the span of what would be any vague, high-level blog post found on any writer's blog. It's nothing new. It's nothing specific. It's all rehash rah-rah of what most middle-to-advanced writers already know. The Drills don't offer anything new.

For the new writer, this may have exactly what you need.

For the middle-advanced writer, go to Amazon, read the table of contents, look at the 'map', then go to the Appendix (all available under the Look Inside feature). From that, you will have all the information contained within the book to write a novel in 12 weeks.

Or, if you want inspiration, if you want a cheerleader in your camp, get this book.

If you want a book that you can follow and write along with, knowing at the end of a set time (as in twelve weeks enumerated in the appendix), get **The 90 Day Novel** by Alan Watt. At least **The 90 Day Novel** gives you specific questions to answer to help you focus your mind to get a novel written and gives you guidelines and guide posts to help you get the book written in 90 days.

Novelist's Boot Camp has some good information, but it's not in-depth enough to satisfy my thirst for more on how to write a novel or to provide guidance. There aren't any nifty tools and ideas I don't already know, and certainly not for the expense of ordering the physical book at hardcover price.

Beginning writers may gain something from it. More advanced writers, you might want to borrow from the library.

Pewterbreath says

BLECH--I don't like anything that makes things out to be "boot camp." I think there's this strange part of America that enjoys making things into difficult, hard, knuckle chewing work. Writing isn't necessarily penning the breaths of angels, but it's also not meant to be three days in hell either. It takes patient work and focus. I was given this book, and I read it, and it's. . .pretty useless.

Angela Joyce says

Tough, efficient, reasonable, and...cute.
