

Writing a Short Synopsis

by *Roxanne Rustand*

Learning to write a concise, appealing synopsis is extremely important. After you start selling, you'll eventually be able to sell on proposal (a synopsis and three chapters) or perhaps on just a synopsis. There are many formats for writing them. Here's one that has worked for me.

Start with a single paragraph for each of the main characters (the hero, the heroine, the main antagonist). Give their *pertinent* backstory, explaining their goals and motivation--the key elements that have driven them toward the journey that is your story. For the hero and heroine, include the internal conflicts they must overcome to find and accept love.

Drop down an extra double-space, center the word "SYNOPSIS", and start the body of your synopsis with a strong hook--an attention-grabbing statement or question. The body of the synopsis includes only what happens on-scene in the story, written in present tense, and shouldn't flounder into the murky, confusing waters of backstory.

Write a paragraph for each of the major plot points, explaining motivations, conflicts, and emotional reactions, and the resulting decisions of the characters at that point. Every plot point should have strong emotional consequences, and the effect on the romance should be clear.

Be sure to include the stages of the romantic relationship--the meet, first kiss, building of the relationship, and the first love scene. What led up to these new stages? What were the characters' emotional reactions afterwards? What changed for them, and what did they resolve to do about it?

External conflicts/danger and sensual tension should build in intensity throughout the synopsis. Clearly spell out the crisis, black moment, climax and resolution. The external plot helps the hero and heroine learn and grow, and to overcome their internal conflicts. By the end of the story they can achieve or overcome something they couldn't have before, and have become worthy partners for each other. Show this change, even if in just a line or two, and clearly show their commitment to one another.

End on a succinct and satisfying note. Then read your synopsis aloud to hunt for awkward or confusing phrasing, and ruthlessly cut extraneous words. Ask "fresh readers" to critique it for clarity and logic. Writing a synopsis is a tough job, but writing a good one can provide you with a good road map as you write your story, and this skill will be essential to your career.

Award-winning author Roxanne Rustand's seventeenth and eighteenth novels will be published in February and March of 2008.