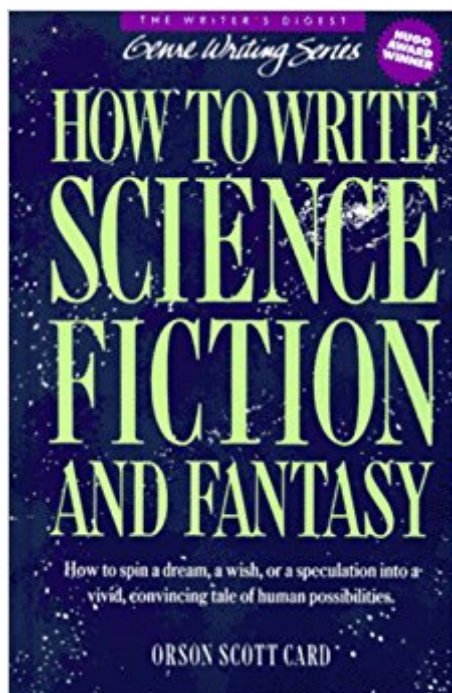


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# How To Write Science Fiction And Fantasy (Genre Writing)



## Synopsis

Orson Scott Card shares his advice on how to break into this field, how to develop fantastic story ideas, and evolve fresh plots.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Orson Scott Card (well known to sf circles as the author of *Ender's Game*) presents his advice on writing science fiction and fantasy. The book has a specific and limited scope: rather than trying to teach everything one needs to know to write fiction, Card addresses only those areas where speculative fiction differs from other types. Consequently, this is not a stand-alone writing book. If you are unacquainted with the craft of plotting, character development, dialog, etc., you will need to fill those gaps in some other way. Within the scope the book sets for itself, however, it is top notch. Card really knows his stuff, and has a knack for articulating what he knows in a helpful and memorable way. Particularly valuable is the section on exposition. While most books on fiction writing preach minimizing exposition, Card understands that speculative fiction requires it. The imaginative worlds of speculative fiction are not familiar to readers; they need explaining, and readers expect satisfying explanations. Card explains the conventions of the genre that are used to present exposition without stalling the story. He uses *Wild Seed* by Octavia Butler to illustrate the ideas, so the reader can see tangible examples of the principles he describes. I also enjoyed his breakdown of stories into four categories (MICE, for milieu, idea, character, and event). He deftly

summarizes how each type of story needs to work, and the problems that can result if you don't know what type of story you are writing. This was illuminating and refreshing, since most books on writing do not even acknowledge that fiction can be driven by anything other than character development. In speculative fiction, however, milieu and idea driven stories are part of the landscape, and the aspiring writer needs to understand how they work. Card also offers excellent advice about the business of writing, covering subjects beyond manuscript preparation and agents, such as writer's workshops and classes, sf conventions, and so on. Once again, his familiarity with the world of sf writing comes through strong and clear; he's not merely repeating standard bits of advice, but is writing from experience. A few words of caution: The book was published in 1990, and so is a bit dated in places (there is a bigger market for fantasy short stories than when Card was writing, for example), and the book emphasizes sf more than fantasy. (One notable disappointment in this regard: In one section, there is a discussion of the mechanics of interstellar travel, time travel, and magic. The first two topics receive well-thought-out lists of the different approaches used in sf, and their story implications. Magic, instead of receiving a similar treatment, gets a digression riffing off the idea that magicians sacrifice body parts to cast spells. It's an interesting train of thought, but something less narrow and idiosyncratic would have been appreciated.) On balance, this is the very best book I have found on the special issues that arise when writing science fiction and fantasy. Paired with something like *The Complete Handbook of Novel Writing*, it will answer most questions an aspiring writer in these genres is likely to face.

I thought I had good ideas for my stories, but after reading this book, I am challenged to make my ideas even better. The style is conversational and motivating. I learned things about the world of writers that I didn't know I needed to know! The Kindle version of this book has quite a few typographical errors, which I'm guessing are not found in print editions.

Fantastic advice and great insights into not only writing overall but specifically the challenges of Speculative Fiction. Probably the most helpful advice in the book was "end the story you started". Understanding the different story types and structures for each was key in figuring out what I have found troubling in so many books. I could never put my finger on exactly what bugged me, but seeing that so many authors start one type of story and finish a different one brought into crystal clarity a key differentiator between professional authors and would-be writers. I expect the wisdom in this book will have a profound effect on making my own writing much stronger.

I bought this because of who he is. I'm still working through it. It's not as fluid as some of the others in my writers-on-writing collection.

This book is a great complement to Stephen King's On Writing book for any aspiring writer, especially sci fi and fantasy writers. Both books are upbeat, useful, and entertaining reads with lots of gems from two great writers. Card's book is more straightforward about the steps to take when writing any book and covers more ground on the topic of how to write, whereas King's book is half autobiography (about becoming a writer, himself), funnier, and more specific to King's personal experience (Card, probably because he teaches, does a better job of synthesizing and drawing upon many references to other authors/books). Both authors agree that it is important to let ideas evolve, let the story tell itself through the characters, be as honest as possible, and to not hold on too tight to the original idea at the expense of ignoring a more interesting story that reveals itself as you follow the characters around in the world you created. There's not much overlap between the two books (making their common themes all the more powerful), so I think together they are a great package for the aspiring writer. I also do not see much reason to spend time reading more than a couple "how to write" books when every successful author says the two most important things are 1) Write a lot and 2) Read a lot (not "how to" books, but in your genre of interest, the Classics, and whatever lights your fire beyond that). Read these two books, be highly entertained and motivated, and get out there and make the magic happen!

Orson Scott Card delivers in this close up look on how Science Fiction and Fantasy stories work. He also gives an in-depth look at the publishing industry, how to get published, and when you need an agent. His insights are valuable to both new writers and experienced ones. However, keep in mind this book steers more towards Science Fiction than Fantasy ( probably because the market is bigger for Science Fiction). Also there are many aspects (such as writing a multiple Point of View novel) which he doesn't cover. Nonetheless, this is a good introduction for anyone seeking to write in either of these genres.

Gave as a gift to a friend, they enjoyed it! Looks a good book...

This and Steven Kings books on writing are two of the best writing books out there. And I think this one, by being more technically specific is the better one. OK if you know all this stuff, it is not going to help, and maybe if you are just setting out as a writer it might be too much. It hit me just right. I

had just had a lesson on why "head hopping" was likely bad. This book covers that level of knowledge and much more besides. It is an easy read.

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