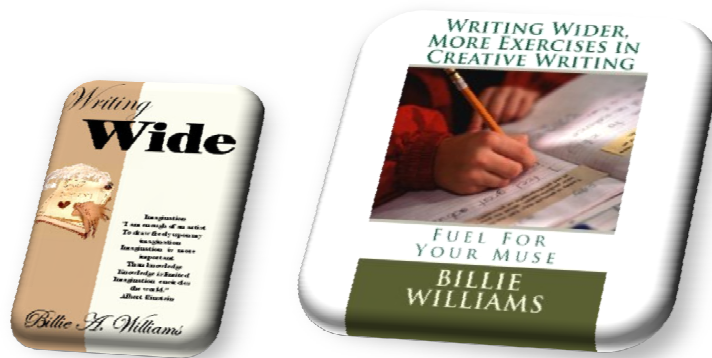


Writing Wide, Exercises in Creative Writing

Writing Tips, Writing Prompts, Writing Exploration



By Billie A Williams

These two books available from wherever you normally buy your books on line or bricks and mortar stores, just ask for them by name.

Writing Wide Class lesson One Handout/supplement
How You Can Communicate Effectively With Your Readers... Every Time
By Beth Ann Erickson Queen Bee of Filbert Publishing :)

As a freelance writer, you need to speak directly to your reader. If you don't do this, you'll lose them. Period.

So, here's what you need to do:

First, understand that the average American reads at around the seventh grade level. This means you should forget using "million dollar" words. Understand that you certainly do not need to dumb-down your message, just use terms that are readily understandable.

The general rule is this: write like you speak.

Don't try to write in any kind of "literary style." Just communicate in the same way you would if you were sitting at a table across from your reader and speaking to them.

This means you'll probably break more than a few grammar rules. This means you'll probably start more than one sentence with the word "and." This means your high school English teacher'll probably accuse you of being a bad writer.

But it also means you'll become an effective communicator.

But now we need to ratchet this advice up a notch.

Next, you need to study how your potential reader speaks, and write using that style.

This means you get to become a chameleon of sorts, assuming the persona of your reader.

For example, if you're writing a piece for an upscale magazine targeting professional businesswomen, you'll use a different "voice" (using different terminology and jargon) than you would if you were writing a piece for the National Enquirer.

If you're trying to sell fishing lures to avid sportsmen, you'd probably use a different voice than you would if you were writing a piece for PC magazine.

You're a wise writer when you research your market thoroughly before submitting a piece to a publication. Read their back issues. Study their direct mail campaigns. Chances are, they've perfected the voice they use and you can reduce your learning curve by a lot when you study their materials.

Ah... writing isn't for the faint of heart, is it? It's a lot of hard (but fun) work. And the writers who recognize this increase their chances for success.

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If you enjoyed this article, you'll love Beth Ann Erickson's "Jumpstart Your Writing Career and Snag Paying Assignments. You can nab your copy here:

<http://filbertpublishing.com/jumpstart.htm>

Writing Wide Class Lesson 1 part 2 Handout/Supplement
How You Can Communicate Effectively With Your Readers... Part Deux
By Beth Ann Erickson Queen Bee of Filbert Publishing :)

Last time we talked about the importance of writing conversationally... speaking the language of your reader. (You can find the April 15 issue of Writing Etc. here: <http://filbertpublishing.com>)

Today we're taking this concept one step further.

When you're speaking with another person, they have the benefit of watching your nonverbal communication as you verbalize your message. You wave your arms, roll your eyes, intone your voice... all these nonverbal cues further the message you're trying to convey.

Unfortunately, written words don't convey nonverbal cues very easily.

That's why we must write conversationally while using absolutely every tool we can find to make up for the lack of nonverbal communication.

Here are a couple of these tools:

First, as a writer, you must "word paint" what you're seeing in your mind and create as similar a picture in your reader's mind as possible. This means that you must choose ultra-specific words... particularly verbs. Of course, using a few passive verbs (such as is/was/had/etc.) is inevitable. However, whenever possible, eliminate them and replace them with a vibrant/active/visual verb. This means that a sentence such as "You are greeted" can easily transform to "Larry greets (active verb) you the minute you step in the door".

Second, you must also use ultra-specific language whenever possible.

Again, the reason I say this is because unlike speaking, your reader isn't able to watch nonverbal cues as you speak. Readers cannot hear your tone of voice. They cannot observe gestures. This means that EVERY word you choose MUST carry its weight and move your message forward.

Here's an example of what I'm talking about. What do you visualize when you read this sentence?

"I drive a car."

Weak sentence, eh? We've probably got two very different pictures in our mind. Here's a better sentence:

I drive a red car.

Closer but I'd venture to guess that our pictures are still very different.

How's this?

I drive a cherry red 2005 Porsche 911 Turbo S. Coupe with an incredible 3.6 L. Turbo engine.

OK. Now we're probably "seeing" the same car PLUS you can infer a number of my personality traits based on this car I choose to drive.

How would your opinion change if I told you I really drive an earth friendly three-cylinder Geo Metro hatch back?

I don't drive either of these cars, but by now I'm sure you're able to see how word choice can influence your reader's opinion of your message.

I digress, so let's get back on track.

You've probably heard the writer's mantra, "show, don't tell".

This sentence puzzled me for far too long. It's actually a very easy concept to understand.

Suppose you came across this line... "The food is cold."

This sentence doesn't draw any "word picture". In fact, at this point, you're probably not even sure if "cold food" is a good or bad thing.

Here's a better phrase: Light dances on little ice crystals as the waiter carries your own little slice of heaven.

Or perhaps instead of saying, "The food is hot," write "Fragrant steam drifts upwards as..." well, I'm sure you get the drift here.

So yes. Write conversationally... but choose ultra specific words.

This means you tighten your verbs. Replace the passive verbs that need replacing with vibrant, active verbs. You won't get rid of every passive verb, and that's fine. However, you must do everything you can to make your reader see, taste, smell, hear, and feel this world you're creating.

Paint a vivid word picture and watch your writing career soar.

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If you enjoyed this article, you'll love Beth Ann Erickson's "Jumpstart Your Writing Career and Snag Paying Assignments. You can nab your copy here:
<http://filbertpublishing.com/jumpstart.htm>

Hand out for lesson 2 WW class
Are You Mastering Grammar Yet?
By Beth Ann Erickson
<http://filbertpublishing.com>

Every now and again I receive an e-mail informing me that a number of the articles on the FilbertPublishing.com website are not grammatically correct.

As helpful as these e-mail writers are, I'm once again compelled to mention this: the writer's job is to not write a grammatically correct sentence, the writer's job is to communicate.

Let me explain:

I memorized a good number of grammar rules while working on my communications degree at St. Cloud State. Strunk and White and I became good buddies.

However, despite my marvelous education, after I graduated, I had a LOT of trouble landing copywriting assignments -- and when I did get them, the clients weren't particularly happy with the results.

So, I hired a personal copywriting coach -- a professional copywriter who's sold millions of dollars worth of products and services through the mail. He also holds a PhD in English. He asked me to e-mail samples of my best writing so he could get a taste of my style.

After spending a good part of a week separating the "flawless" samples from the mere "excellent" ones, I whipped together an e-mail, attached the appropriate documents, then waited for his reply.

When it arrived, I wasn't prepared for his response: "I can tell you'll be an excellent writer because you write great e-mails. The rest of your writing sucks, but your e-mail text is perfect."

Boy. Talk about a deflating experience.

He went on to say, "Forget everything you learned about grammar, language usage, and sentence structure. Your writing doesn't communicate. It's too perfect. You need to speak the language of your reader... just like you do in your e-mails. If you don't speak directly to your reader -- and do it EVERY time you write -- you won't be an effective copywriter. Period."

So I began my illustrious copywriting career pretending everything I wrote was going to be included in an e-mail.

After spending considerable time perfecting a conversational tone in everything I wrote, my writing career really took off. Articles started selling. I found a home for my novels. Copywriting assignments started flowing in.

Although it pained me to occasionally break grammar rules, I now find it liberating to know I have the freedom to effectively communicate a message without wondering if I'm allowing a participle to dangle.

So do I occasionally break grammar rules? Yup. Will I continue to break them? Yup.

Walking the fine line between creating effective communication and grammatically correct word usage is always an interesting battle, with effective communication winning more often than not.

But don't take my word for it.

This weekend, take a good listen to the conversations taking place around you. Try to replicate -- in writing -- what you've heard. You're about to transcribe some interesting phrases!

After you've done this, "capture their language" by writing something that would persuade those same people to do something you want them to do -- whether you're hoping to get them to read one of your articles, purchase something you're selling, or buy a product a client has hired you to promote.

It's an interesting exercise, one that hopefully illustrates the notion that writing that effectively communicates is almost always more powerful than grammatically correct, perfect sentences. When you speak the language of your reader, you'll be able to capture and hold their interest. When you capture and hold your reader's interest, that's when truly effective communication takes place.

And isn't that the goal of almost every writer?

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Beth Ann Erickson is the publisher of Writing Etc; writer of hundreds of published articles; author of *The Almach* (<http://filbertpublishing.com/Almach.htm>), *HeartSongs* (<http://filbertpublishing.com/heartsongs.htm>) and two nonfiction titles including *Jumpstart Your Writing Career* (<http://filbertpublishing.com/jumpstart.htm>) and *How to Get Happily Published Without Falling for Scams, Hooks, Lines, and Sinkers* (<http://filbertpublishing.com/happy.htm>); and co-author of a 3 CD set with Master Copywriter Vicky Heron (<http://filbertpublishing.com/copy.htm>). You can contact her via <http://filbertpublishing.com>

Handout for Writing Prompts to Writing Tips Course  
BEWARE OF THE SPELL CHECKER!

If you've spent any time with a personal computer or word processor, you, most likely have discovered the little icon denoted it in red if it is misspelled. From there you can ask for suggestions on the correct spelling.

You know, just about the time I thought computers were more intelligent than people, I was sent the following poem. Each word passed the "spell check," but as you can see, they were not spelled correctly for the word's use. I guess it proves, whatever man creates, he can circumvent. Hope you enjoy it.

Eye halve a spelling chequer  
It came with my pea sea  
It plainly marques four my revue  
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.  
Eye strike a key and type a word  
And weight four it two say  
Weather eye am wrong oar write  
It shows me strait a weigh.  
As soon as a mist ache is maid  
It nose bee fore two long  
And eye can put the error rite  
Its rarely ever wrong.  
Eye have run this poem threw it  
I am shore your pleased two no  
Its letter perfect in it's weigh  
My chequer tolled me sew

Author unknown

## Six Reasons Why Manuscripts Heavy on Adjectives and Adverbs Don't Work

1. More is less. When a string of adjectives or adverbs is used, they detract from each other.
2. IT can be demeaning to the reader when the writer fills in every last detail for him. It assumes he has no imagination of his own.
3. It is often preferable to leave things blank and force the reader to use his imagination—that way he makes the text his own, becomes more fully engaged in the manuscript. He won't set it down if *it's his*.
4. Writers who overuse adjectives and adverbs tend to use common ones. Usually ones they've heard used in the same context before—and the hackneyed result is immediately apparent.
5. Adjectives and adverbs often ironically, **weaken** the subjects. It is as if the writer were saying to the reader, "This noun (or verb) is not strong enough to stand on its own, so I will modify it (or build it up) with a few adjectives (or adverbs)."
6. Finally, the overall effect of a text encumbered with adjectives, adverbs and the inevitable commas in between makes for very slow, awkward reading—which these writers would find out for themselves if they took the time to read their own work aloud.

\*\*Most writing books encourage you to read your work aloud so that you can hear if you've managed to capture the rhythm and meaning you intended. You will quickly discover weak, inadequate or confused writing. You will stumble where the prose is weak.

"Vigorous writing is Concise...make every word count..." Wm. Strunk and E.B. White (The Elements of Style—every writer should have one.

## Wide Spaces Word Choice Handout, by Billie A Williams ©2011

One great thing about writing is it can never be wrong. It is your story, told your way. You may need to polish up the grammar, or be certain of your word choice checking with a dictionary or thesaurus, but it can be told your way. A thesaurus is a wonderful tool if you have never used one you should get used to using it and a dictionary so that your writing remains interesting and compelling.

For instance, secret:

|                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Clandestine,      | sly,          |
| covert,           | stealthy,     |
| underground,      | confidential, |
| undisclosed,      | classified,   |
| surreptitious,    | restricted,   |
| furtive,          | mystery,      |
| hush-hush,        | enigma,       |
| cloak-and-dagger, | riddle.       |
| closet,           |               |

Are just a few of the replacement words I found in my thesaurus.

1. Try your hand at creating a sentence with each of these words.
2. If you need a new definition, if secret doesn't say enough to define them for you, try looking them up in your dictionary. What new words did you find there?

Another place to look for words to replace **secret** is a synonym and antonym dictionary. In this dictionary I found these replacement words:

|             |           |
|-------------|-----------|
| Hidden      | Buried,   |
| Under wraps | Covered,  |
| Concealed,  | Shrouded, |
| Ensneced,   | Cloaked,  |

Veiled,

Masked,

Screened, in the dark

Incognito

3. Can you find at least 6 more words that could be used in place of secret either in a dictionary, thesaurus, or a synonym and antonym dictionary?
4. Write a brief paragraph about secrets, but do not use the word secret instead use one of your synonyms.

Synonym: Means the same

Antonym: Means the opposite

Haven't had enough yet – there's more get your copy of Writing Wide, Exercises in Creative Writing at Filbert Publishing – click here  
<http://www.filbertpublishing.com/WW.htm>

Best-Selling, Award winning Mystery/Suspense author Billie A Williams is a fiction, non-fiction and poetry author and has won numerous contests for her short/flash fiction stories, essays, and poetry. Currently she has over two dozen books published. She is published in various magazines such as the literary magazine Thema; Guide, a Magazine for Children, Novel Advice.com, Writing Etc. WritingNow.com, and Women In The Arts newsletter as well as Sister's in Crime, to list but a few.

Williams is currently a member of The Wisconsin Regional Writers Association (WRWA) Upper Peninsula Writers Association (UPWA) National Association of Women Writers (NAWW) Sister's in Crime, Women in the Arts Program, Electronically Published Internet Connection (EPIC), Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. (SCBWI) and Children's Book Insider, and the Children Writers Coaching Club. Visit her at her websites [www.billiewilliams.com](http://www.billiewilliams.com) or <http://writingwide.com> and sign up for her Newsletter and/or Billie-Williams-Mystery-Book-Of-The-Month-Book-Club on her website.

Find out more about me and the books I write at my website at [www.billiewilliams.com](http://www.billiewilliams.com)

If you have any questions, send me an email at [billie@billiewilliams.com](mailto:billie@billiewilliams.com)

I am more than willing to speak to your group – if you have an idea for a program you'd like me to present, please do not hesitate to write, email.

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**WRITING TIPS –**  
**For the Mystery Writer**  
by Billie A Williams © 2007

(These are specifically for Mystery Writers but most of them apply to all genres.)

1. How to start:
  - Every story beginning starts as a thought an idea~~a what if? in your mind.
  - A curious, an open mind, a sharp eye for seeing what might be, a tuned ear, writers are allowed to eaves drop— these are the things every writer needs.
  - Check your local newspaper for ideas. If there were burglaries, a series of them, begin by asking yourself questions such as: -How did the thief know no one would be home-was he friend or neighbor who would know their schedule? What were they looking for; did they steal the same thing from every house that was robbed? After the where—the who, what, when, why should begin your thinking to turn this newspaper article into your own story.
2. Characters for me are the beginning of any story I write. The idea, what my main premise or theme is, and then I pick and choose my main character. One who can display all the traits needed to fully develop and tell the story.  
The main characters station in life, his or her personality, the psychological make-up and more will determine which direction your plot will grown. This will be your protagonist.
3. Next select your other view point characters who will carry less weight than the protagonist, but have a voice in your story. These might include the antagonist, the confidant or best friend, the romantic interest if there is to be one. Then the miscellaneous/secondary characters. These secondary characters have what amount to cameo appearances. They are not view point people, but they have a needed place, a reason for being in your story, a function of their own, they aren't just window dressing.
4. The Plot. Always your plot is the result of a problem your main character has either with in him (inner or psychological) with his environment, or with some other character or characters, or entity (a company, or organization for instance). In the mystery story the problem has to do with solving the mystery.

Your questions should be what should the main character discover? It doesn't need to be a murder—it merely needs to be a crime that threatens your protagonist's status quo. What or who will get in your sleuth's way so that his/her solution won't come too easily.

5. Here comes the fun part. Make a list of the clues you could use in your story—you don't necessarily have to use all of them that you list, so make the list extensive. Pick which one will be your decisive clue. Which one proves to be so vital to your story that it is the one that sets your sleuth on the trail to solve the mystery? This piece of information, this pivotal clue might be something that points directly to the criminal (the antagonist).

6. Another area always included in a mystery is your ‘red herrings’ the original meaning of this term will clarify exactly what this means to your mystery. Originally, a herring, which is quite the odiferous fish, was dragged across a trail to confuse and confound the dogs training to be trackers in fox hunts or man hunts. (the blood hound, and the fox hound are examples)

These make your mystery harder to solve, but also challenge your reader. Red Herrings are slipped in where they act as a distraction or diversion while a real clue slips by unnoticed by our readers and perhaps you sleuth at this point. Usually, but not always this covert clue, will trigger a recollection in his/her mind at some crucial later point in the story to help solve the mystery.

7. Think about the mysteries you’ve read. Suspense is a very big part of the mystery genre. Scaring your character with footfalls being heard on the darkened stair case, a door squeaking slowly, deliberately open or slammed shut, raises the hackles on your readers’ and sleuth’s necks. This is but one way to get your readers to identify with your sleuth as they both shiver in fear.
8. In some mysteries, the setting becomes a character and does as much to flavor the story as any of the characters. It is true your setting should fit the mood of your story. It could be a dank damp Sunday afternoon with a fog so thick you can’t see your hand in front of your face, it could be a dark drizzly night, it could be a sunny day when your sleuth needs to proceed to the dark dungeon like basement and its array of rooms... Think of Snoopy, the Peanuts character’s dog sitting on top of his dog house typing “it was a dark and stormy night.” Write what your reader will be able to visualize. Make it so vivid, so real a reader can’t help but feel the angst of your sleuth or character. Remember, don’t TELL us s/he was afraid make us feel it by SHOWING with details that pulls our emotion into the same panic sphere your character is in. Need an example? Read a Stephen King or John Saul novel.
9. The best place to begin your story is ‘in media res,’ or in the middle of some action already happening. Mysteries (any story really) should begin with action, with a gun shot or at the very least, something exciting, or very interesting. A hook to pull your reader into your story. Most manuals on writing suggest an action beginning that quickly introduces your main character—your protagonist.

My book, *Skull Music*, starts with my main character/protagonist arriving at the scene of flashing police and ambulance lights against the faded, dilapidated walls of the narrow alley way behind stores on Main Street where a mutilated body has been discovered. In the car of the victim are a cassette tape which turns out to be recorded sounds, weird noises no one can place on it and a very strange x-ray that couldn’t be of a human skull, but what is it. Clearly the chief investigator is nearly sick and one of his rookie deputies leaves the scene to regurgitate from the dread of the scene.

10. Before you begin, know how the story will end. If you set a story goal before you write the first paragraph—the story goal will be your ending—you will be like an archer aiming for the bull’s eye on a target and your story will be straight on the mark even with all the twists and turns of a good mystery – you want to keep your eye on the bull’s eye, i.e. the story goal.

#### TERMS AND THEIR MEANING:

Protagonist – Central Character in a story

Antagonist – Adversary – against the main character

Confidant – best friend

Romantic Interest – boy friend, significant other

Red Herring – false clue

Sleuth – detective, amateur or professional

About the Author: Best-Selling, Award winning Mystery/Suspense author Billie A Williams is a fiction, non-fiction and poetry author and has won numerous contests for her short/flash fiction stories, essays, and poetry. Currently she has over two dozen books published. She is published in various magazines such as the literary magazine Thema; Guide, a Magazine for Children, Novel Advice.com, Writing Etc. WritingNow.com, and Women In The Arts newsletter as well as Sister’s in Crime, to list but a few.

Williams is currently a member of The Wisconsin Regional Writers Association (WRWA) Upper Peninsula Writers Association (UPWA) National Association of Women Writers (NAWW) Sister’s in Crime, Women in the Arts Program, Electronically Published Internet Connection (EPIC), Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators. (SCBWI) and Children’s Book Insider, and the Children Writers Coaching Club. Visit her at her websites [www.billiewilliams.com](http://www.billiewilliams.com) or <http://writingwide.com> and sign up for her Newsletter and/or Billie-Williams-Mystery-Book-Of-The-Month-Book-Club on her website.

Find out more about me and the books I write at my website at [www.billiewilliams.com](http://www.billiewilliams.com)

If you have any questions, send me an email at [billie@billiewilliams.com](mailto:billie@billiewilliams.com)

I am more than willing to speak to your group – if you have an idea for a program you’d like me to present, please do not hesitate to write, email.

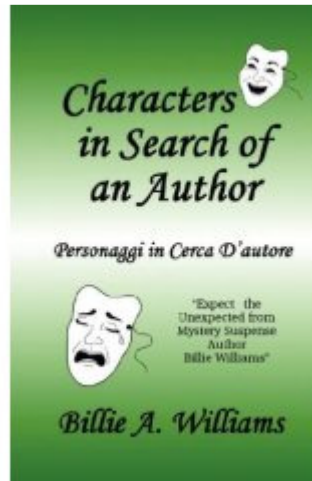
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## TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR SCENES STAND OUT IN A GOOD WAY



1. Every scene that is set down/written by the author has to have a reason to be. Why are you writing this scene? It must move the story forward.
2. Every scene should capture a sharply defined turning point and reveal its meaning to the reader. What is happening that will advance the story and inform your reader's understanding of the story as a whole?
3. Dialogue in a scene should be taunt and pointed. Not just conversation for conversations sake.
4. Rescue your saggy middle by inserting pertinent dialogue rather than a lot of exposition that may move your story forward but your reader will skip to get to the heart of the message.
5. Decide the scene goal for the POV (Point of View) character before you write the scene – why is s/he there, what are they going to accomplish that will move the story forward. Don't be afraid to examine the hard stuff, the inner rational.

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR MAKING YOUR **CHARACTERS** STAND OUT IN A GOOD WAY

1. Show your readers a reason to care about your protagonist. The reader needs to feel compassion and quickly so that they have a reason to follow your character further into the story.
2. Establish protagonist's goodness and problem early as early as possible.
3. Readers need a reason to wish your characters free of their current and/or past troubles.
4. Find the secret strength in your main character, that is why I recommend doing a Zodiac match for your characters, especially the main ones – strengths and weaknesses are then at your finger tips. Your readers will bond better with your character then.
5. Make your heroes human—super heroes don't work, bring them down to size...they need to be human not super human.
6. Play on the heroes impact already played on others not what she/he will do. The good they did to someone else – already – not what they will do somewhere else in your novel.
7. Readers want to be inside character's heart and mind, right away. Show us what your hero is made of.

***How to Hook a Reader***  
***Some things your first sentence or paragraph must do!***



1. Name the character
2. Tell something significant about the plot
3. Show a personality quirk of one of the characters
4. Illustrate (show don't tell) a character's attitude.
5. Show the way the narrative mind works
6. Give something of the plot, a clue, a trick, or foreshadow one of these.
7. Lead the reader into excitement using strong action verbs, emotions, feelings – your five senses. Powerful feelings – will draw the reader in
8. Hint of a major challenge facing your main character
9. And don't forget to raise key questions about what's going to happen next. Render a mysterious or suspenseful occurrence and snag that reader.

This is excerpted from the book: *Write to Entice, Spice up Your Writing* and may not be used

in whole or in part, without the express written consent of the author. Here is the table of contents from the original manuscript.

## Billie Williams Mystery Book of The Month Book Club

Print Book Club: or electronic-book Club: (different pricing) Both clubs include extras: Readers Guides, Phone calls or online chats with your book club local chapter, Book Marks, Newsletter and more...

As special premiums, for contests and/or names drawn at random: Cookbooks, t-shirts, caps, mugs, and more as available. Autographed cover flats or posters.

Book List: In the order you will receive them – one a month after you join. Covers and blurbs, as well as first chapters, are available on my website at [www.billiewilliams.com](http://www.billiewilliams.com)

If you need more information contact me at: billie at billie williams dot com. spelled B I L L I E

1. Knapsack Secrets
2. Small Town Secrets
3. Ancient Secrets
4. Skull Music
5. Ghost Music of Vaudeville
6. Death by Candlelight
7. Candlelight and Shadows
8. The Pink Lady Slipper
9. Bed and Breakfast Murders
10. Diamonds, Death and Deceit
11. Tracker
12. Watch For the Raven

Zodiac Series to available now: titles

1. Capricorn Goat (January Flannel)
2. Fin, Fur and Fatal (February England)
3. Money Isn't Everything (Mary March)
4. Tracker (April Shauers)
5. Cauldron (Tiffany Tarus)
6. Antique Armor (June Fabrizio)
7. July Heat (Judy July)
8. August: Orchestrated Murders (Leona Augustine) current Works In Progress
9. September:
10. October:
11. November:
12. December:

Billie Williams Mystery Book Club of the Month

You Tube Link: <http://www.youtube.com/basbleu43>

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Video and audio links

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