The Ultimate Guide to Writing Smut Fic

by QuinnAnderson

Summary

A comprehensive guide to writing both gay and straight erotic fiction for Sherlock and other fandoms, written by published erotica novelist Quinn Anderson. Includes lists of sexy words, references, and some general writing tips. Please feel free to use without credit.

Notes

I mentioned wtffanfiction during this guide, and I'm now proud to say that they published the quote where I mentioned them!

Here.

Opening Notes: Greetings, fellow writers. I proudly present to you "The Ultimate Guide to Writing Smut Fic."

**Updated in 2017**

My name is Quinn Anderson, and I've been writing smut for over ten years now. I'm also a published author. I've written the Murmur Inc. series and several other LGBT+ erotic novels, which you can find in the references section, and I've been an active member of fandom since childhood. Now that my unimpressive credentials are out of the way, let's get to the point.

A friend of mine recently told me that she has difficulty writing smut, because she feels like she's being repetitive or boring or that she just can't create the right mood. To help her, I agreed to put together what I consider to be the building blocks of writing erotic fiction, both heterosexual and homosexual. This is a comprehensive list that she (and now all of you) can consult when you're
writing if you can't think of a word/feel like you've said the same thing over and over/just want to get some fresh ideas.

This article is free for everyone to consult, and there's absolutely no need to credit me if you use something from this list. Most everything on here is fairly common, and an experienced smut writer will likely recognise everything here. I've attempted to categorise it neatly for easy reference, and some things are mentioned in more than one section because they are equally applicable. I also have a tendency to switch tenses/perspectives, depending on the wording, so hopefully that won't annoy the dickens out of most of you. If you think of something I missed and want me to add it to the list, please don't hesitate to leave a comment.

**Disclaimer:** I am no way trying to give the impression that I know everything there is to know about writing smut. Literotica is an ever-evolving beast, and I just want to help my fellow writers. I give some general advice at the end that you're absolutely free to ignore. I'm not trying to suggest that anyone who does the things I warn against is a bad writer, nor am I attempting to criticise anyone (except perhaps E.L. James. We'll get to that). If I at any point give that impression, please let me know, and I'll change my wording. However, please keep in mind that this is a **FREE resource intended to help others, and I'm under no obligation to anyone but myself.**

All further notes/comment from me will either be in parenthesis or marked with an *.

**Table of Contents**

(to reach any section, use the control and f keys, then search for the heading)

i. Introduction

ii. Reaction Words

iii. Adverbs

iv. Sexy Alternatives to "Said"

v. Generally Sexy Actions

vi. Kissing

vii. Blow Jobs

viii. Cunnilingus

ix. Penetrative Intercourse

x. First Times and Losing Virginities

xi. The Orgasm (:chorus of angels:) 

xii. Generally Acceptable Slang Terms

xiii. Feelings When Aroused

xiv. Sexy Words

xv. Things that Sound Good Until You Imagine Someone Actually Doing Them
i. Introduction

If you read/write fan fiction for long enough, certain ideas, tropes, and terms will get ingrained in you. For instance, in nearly every fic I've ever read, when characters kiss, one of them gasps, and the other "uses the opportunity to slip their tongue into their mouth" or some nigh-identical variation. Also, in nearly every porn fic, when one character orgasms, the "feel of their muscles clenching/pulsing" pushes the other character "over the edge." Sound familiar? We've all done it. We've all written it. Hell, I'm guilty of half the things on my Don'ts list, and I'm comfortable with that. Does the ubiquity of certain fan-fictiony phrases make them bad? Not at all. Should we all be trying to find new ways of saying the same ideas? Maybe. Maybe not. I like to think that these classics are simply one of the steps we all use to convey certain ideas in a way we know everyone will understand. I'm not attempting to denounce creativity, and certainly it's always a good idea to introduce new ideas, but we all need to start somewhere. That's the true purpose of this smut-writing guide.

When my debut novel was published, I had a lot of fan fiction habits violently beaten out of me. I had to remove about a dozen adjectives for "eyes" that bordered on absurd but seemed like a marvellous idea at the time, and I was forbidden on pain of death to ever use the phrase "ministrations" again. I also unwittingly changed my main character's name from "Nik" to "Nick" halfway through the novel. That, however, was not the worst of it. Let me tell you that there is nothing more embarrassing than going through your raw manuscript, reaching a sex scene and seeing that the editors ripped the ever-loving piss out of it. Having the anatomical impossibilities of your seemingly mind-blowing smut pointed out is enough to make even the most hardened of hard-core-porn writers cringe. It's even worse when you misspell the word "public" in a truly unfortunate way (hint: I forgot a letter), and it leads the editor to say, "This made me laugh so hard, my cat got up and sprinted out the room in a panic." I'm not here to do that to you. I'm here to try and keep someone else from doing it to you to the very best of my ability. Enjoy, and may the smut be with you.

ii. Reaction Words

Shivers
Shudders
Trembles
Quivers
Quakes
Shakes
Gasps
Moans
Groans
Jolts
Jerks
Lurches
Startles
Pants
Huffs
Gulps
Cries out
Melts
Bites back a moan
Breath hitches
Babbling/sputtering
Collapsing
Knees buckling
Swallowing hard
Going limp
See stars
Makes a strangled noise
Inhales (combine with an adverb i.e "he inhaled sharply")
Exhales
Skin prickles
Brain short-circuits or stops functioning
Sweating (there's loads to be done with sweat: the musky smell of it, tasting the saltiness of it, seeing a lover coated in a thin sheen of it, having it slick their bodies, etc.)
Flushing (Flushing tends to happen in fleshy and sensitive areas. Armpits, cheeks, neck, ears, chest, genitals, and whole-body flushes for maximum effect)
Eyes roll back
Clenches
Is stunned
Gagging for it
Dizzy for it
iii. Adverbs - Use these with prudence. An abundance of adverbs in a text can weaken your writing.

Shakily
Heatedly
Desperately
Incoherently
Roughly
Raggedly
Headily
Readily
In a Needy way
Deeply
Breathily
Noisily
Loudly
Heavily
Dangerously
Seductively
Languidly
Lazily
Sensually
Silkily
Oily
Hunggrily
Sinfully
Darkly
Warmly
Softly
Gently
Tenderly
Harshly
Lusciously
Quickly
Slowly
Frantically
Wantonly

iv. Sexy Alternatives to "Said"

Purred
Cooed
Murmured
Whispered
Stuttered
Breathed
Rasped
Cried out
Begged

Muttered (I'm not a fan of this one because I associate muttering with being angry, but I see it often enough)

Growled
Grunted
Husked
Howled
Keened
Mewled
Choked

Sobbed (dub-con warnings; use with caution)

Whimpered
Blurted
Bleated (I like to use this for comedic effect)
Teased
Plead

v. Generally Sexy Actions

Sinking to their knees
Licking
Biting
Nipping
Pressing foreheads together
Shoving a hand between someone's legs
Shoving your hips together
Pinning their wrists
Caress
Wink
Wet/lick lips
Hike a skirt up/ruck a shirt up
Stroke (skin, hair, genitals, etc.)

(when one character is pressed against a wall) A does something, and B slams/throws their head back into the wall in reaction.

Undoing buttons/zips with their teeth (I suggest only having experienced lovers do this. It's remarkably difficult and you run the risk of getting your lip caught in a zip. It's not something to have a virgin get right on their first time in fiction if you want to be believable).

Splay hands across someone's chest or lower back
Rake nails across skin/through hair
Hooking a leg around someone's waist
Knee between thighs
Biting collarbones/hip bones/ribs (the bones that tend to protrude beneath the skin and draw it taut)
Sucking neck skin into the mouth
Cupping their cheeks
Grasping their chin and tilting it up/down
Placing a finger against their lips
Letting breath tickle their ears
Digging your nails in
Dipping your tongue into collarbone/bellybutton/ears/etc.
Tugging on earlobes with teeth
Push their hair back/card through it/rake through it
Hair pulling
Lips brushing ears
Ghosting over their neck with fingers/lips
Running fingers lightly over someone's palm or wrist
Hip grinding/rutting/thrusting/rolling/shift ing/rocking together

Dirty Talk (this can be anything from a simple "Oh, God, yes" to a full-on "I want to feel your name burning on my skin for days." I suggest loads of cursing and using the lord's name in vain. "Oh fuck, oh, Jesus, fuck yes, there, just like that, fucking Christ" is a good start.)

Nipple play (Use caution depending on gender. Some men love it, some hate it, the majority of women love it)

Nuzzle

Tease/torture/tortment

*Credit for that line to a Sherlock/Moriarty fic called "Crescendo" by PlainJaneDoe. It's amazing and a prime example of dirty talk. 10/10 Highly recommend. It's listed in the References section.

vi. Kissing

Lip play – biting, running your tongue over the lips, over where they meet, just inside of them, tracing their outline with the tip of the tongue

Massaging the tongues together

Rolling them over each other

Imitating sex/fucking the person's mouth with your tongue

Brushing lips together

Pausing when lips are just barely touching and breathing each other's air (can cause dizziness akin to sexual arousal)

Sucking their bottom lip into your mouth

Bruising/crushing/kissing hard
Teeth clicking
Sucking on the tongue
Swirling your tongue around theirs
Flicking your tongue (also for oral sex)

**vii. Blow Jobs**

Reddened lips
Swollen lips
Slick
Sloppy
Lips darkened and wet with saliva
Making eye contact
Hollowing cheeks
Swirling tongue

Gently, *gently* biting or scraping teeth (quickest way to make a man cringe is to mention biting his thing, so please exercise with caution)

Dipping tongue into the slit

Fucking someone's mouth (for the receiver of oral)
Deep throating (for experienced lovers, usually)

Playing with balls
Rubbing the perineum* or frenulum**
Swallowing around it

Engulfed in wet heat

Pulling the foreskin back to expose the head
Using hands and lips together

Suction
Pressure

* The perineum is an erogenous zone for both males and females. In males it's the stretch of skin between the balls and the anus, which is receptive to massage. In females, it's the area between the vulva and the anus.

** The frenulum is a band of tissue under the penis that connects to the foreskin, which some men find sensitive.
And then just for general knowledge, the glans is the head of the penis, or head.

viii. Cunilingus (Female Oral Sex)

Lapping

Playing with the woman's wetness/juices

Fingering (make note of finger nail length. Long fingernails need to be careful)

Parting the lips

Flicking your tongue

Flower comparisons (these are an old cliché, but you can refresh it a bit if you avoid the usual)

Fleshy pink (red and occasionally purple are also acceptable colour comparisons)

Delving the tongue in

Playing with the inner thing

Using synonyms for the clitoris should be done with caution. Some like "button" and "nub" are commonly accepted, but if you say "pleasure button" or "Southern nipple", you may get some sniggers.

ix. Intercourse (Anal* and Vaginal**)

Sinking into someone/down onto a cock

Riding – descriptions of bouncing breasts for females, working thigh muscles for both, watching the man's cock disappear into their body

Pulling hips down harder

Digging fingers into their shoulders/chest/hips/back

Setting a pace/rhythm – losing that rhythm as climax approaches

Getting seated

Buried in a person

Snapping/slamming/pounding hips

* There's a LOT of debate about the "proper" amount of preparation needed before anal sex. Some people insist you can just go for it, while others (myself included), think those people are ruining anal sex for everyone else. I've had loads of female-identifying friends of mine say they tried anal once and hated it and will never do it again. This is almost the result of people who don't know what the hell they're doing. IF YOU'RE READING THIS, STOP IT. STOP PUTTING DICKS AND SEX TOYS IN THINGS WITHOUT LEARNING TO DO IT PROPERLY. DO A DAMN GOOGLE SEARCH ON HOW TO PREPARE FOR ANAL.

I could write a whole article on this alone, but for the sake of brevity, I'll break it down: before anal, 1) you need to clean out your ass, 2) you need to use lube, and 3) some people say you need to get your ass used to taking penis-sized objects. Personally, I think fingering/rimming will do just
fine, but literally everyone has a different opinion on this. On a personal note, I think writing preparation (lubing up, fingerling, etc.) can be really hot. I'm not sure why people shy away from them, thinking that it "kills the mood." Just deciding who does the preparing can be hot. Does Person A prepare Person B for hours, until they're begging for it? Or just until they can take it without being hurt because they're so desperate to fuck? Or does Person B insist on preparing themselves, letting Person A sit back and watch them finger themselves? There are all sorts of sexy possibilities.

Also, let's talk about appropriate lube. I have read some absolutely horrific fics where people used inappropriate, unsanitary things as lube. Butter is not lube. Soy Sauce is not lube. Candle Wax is not lube. No, I am not kidding when I say I have actually seen these things in fic. Please don't do that to the characters. Some of us love them deeply.

** It's important to note that both the G-spot and the clit are involved in female orgasm (and are tied to one another. Stimulating the G-spot stimulates the clit), so a number of women like to stimulate their clit while having penetrative sex to facilitate an easier climax. You can add this for a bit of extra realism—or just for the sexiness of it (Blythe, M. J., Rosenthal, S. L., & American Academy of Pediatrics, 2007, pp. 1335-1337).

It is also important to decide if you are going to mention safe sex practices in your fic (you should do this for oral sex as well, since you're just as likely to get STIs from oral sex as penetrative, though you can't get pregnant). I'm personally in favour of mentioning getting checked for STIs and using condoms in fic. I think it's important to mention these things so people start thinking about them/recognising the issues of unplanned pregnancy and disease. However, the counterargument is that this is fantasy, and obviously fictional characters can't get pregnant or diseased without the author writing it. It's up to you, but in the interest of realism, I highly suggest you at least have the characters have a conversation about why they're not using condoms, such as "Here's my bloodwork. I'm STI free. By the way, I'm on the pill." Not that flippant, obviously, but hopefully you get what I mean.

x. Writing First Times and Losing Virginities

First Times can be a mixed bag. Sometimes they're pure, animalistic, I-must-throw-you-down-and-fuck-you-right-now humping sessions, and other times they're slow, tender bouts of lovemaking between two characters who have been building up to this moment for 356 pages. Either way, they can go horribly awry. It will be more realistic if the characters fumble a bit or spend time learning each other's bodies. No one is magically endowed with a perfect knowledge of their partner's sexual likes and dislikes, so let your characters experiment. Have fun with it. Whether you go for the hard fuck or the candlelit seduction, a first time should have a sense of reverence, if not in canon than in your writing. Draw it out. Don't be shy with the foreplay. Have someone come too early and then spend their refractory period ruthlessly pleasuring the other until they're ready for round two. You really can't go wrong.

For vaginal sex, if the woman is a virgin, please refrain from pulling a Fifty Shades of Grey and expecting there to be anything as ridiculous as a "weird, pinching sensation deep inside [you]", and it is not possible for someone to "rip through [your] virginity" (James, 2011, p. 101). Also, for the love of God, if you ever make your characters feel anything of the sort, do not have them shout "Argh!" as it happens. I've never face-palmed so hard in my life. Losing your virginity can hurt, yes, and there can be blood and the breaking of the hymen, but if you are properly lubricated and take your time, there is no reason for these things to occur (Brion-Meisels, S., Lowenheim, G., Rendeiro, B., 1982, p. 157).

If you want to see the absolute best video in the world for debunking this myth about the hymen
and "cherry popping" go to lacigreen's YouTube channel and/or type in "You can't POP your cherry (Hymen 101)" into the search bar. **Update: Laci has recently come under heavy criticism for associating with white supremacists and hate groups. I'm still recommending her video, but I do not personally endorse her or any of her other videos**

- For anal sex, if you think a character can take a 12-inch cock with minimal preparation on the first go and experience nothing but soul-sizzling pleasure, you are mistaken. See "Intercourse."

**xi. The Orgasm**

The Earth stops spinning/stutters on its axis

Dissolve into pleasure

Lightning

Electricity

Waves (overdone, but you can jazz this one up if you try – i.e. waves of fire instead of the usual)

Explosions

Shockwaves

Rippling

Trails of fire

Fire pooling low in their abdomen

A spring coiling tightly and then being release

Fireworks (please only use this sparingly. It's the oldest term for kissing/pleasure/etc. in history)

Light – white light in particular, or everything cutting to white noise

Vision fading to black

Static

Shattering

Splintering

Pulsing (also feeling someone pulse whilst inside them)

Time slows

Falling

Flying

Rocketing

Going still/tense

Jerking
Vocalisation in any form
Moaning a mixture of curse words and their lover's name

xii. Generally Acceptable Slang Terms*

Clit
G-spot
Cock
Dick
Prick and Fanny for the Anglophiles (penis and vagina)
Slit (male and female)
Entrance

If you want to channel your inner porn star you can say cunt, pussy and hole.

Cum or come (I have seen ragging debates about which one of these should be used, but really it's either)

* There are some slang terms that are generally accepted but should be used with a grain of salt. These usually have to do with genitalia, like saying shaft, rod, manhood etc. for penis and mound, core, cave, tunnel etc. for vagina. It's sort of an odd line, because using clinical terms like penis in fiction can be just as jarring as using vague terms like cavern for vagina. It took me until I was 19 to finally say the word "cock" in fan fiction, and I still sometimes default to the softer "erection." Go with what you're comfortable with, but keep your audience in mind. This also applies for things like semen and vaginal lubrication. There's no need to use creative terms for those things. I've seen the term "spunk trumpet" used, and I may never recover.

xiii. Feelings when Aroused

Feeling hazy
Drunk
Intoxicated
Heady
Fuzzy
Dizzy
Dazed
Breathless
Heart pounding/racing/stuttering/skipping
Blood buzzing/roaring in ears
Hot (and all obvious synonyms – warm, burning, smouldering, scorching, blazing etc. These are particularly good for describing eyes. i.e. "The moment their gaze met, her eyes blazed")

Shaky

Overwhelmed (a bit dub-con, so use with caution)

Light

Light-headed

Fumbling

Drowning in pleasure

Burst

Combust

Sizzling

Sparking

Crackling

Fiery

Teeming

Searing

Passion

Ecstasy

Bliss

Pleasure

xiv. Sexy Words

Dark

Sinful

Carnal

Lithe

Lissom

Supine

Wanton

Animalistic
Unadulterated
Undulate
Lust
Want
Need
Velvet/Satin/Lace/Silk
Hunger
Burn
Wet noises/slick/liquid/squelch
Frenzy
Frantic
Frenetic
Desire
Heat
Arousal
Adrenaline
Clenched
Intensity/intense
Intoxicate
Flutter
Strip
Sluice
Tease
Spark
Ignite
Ride
Friction
Frisson
Flicked
Sinuous/sinewy/willow
Lilting
Sonorous
Rumbling
Sweet
Slide
Frustration
Squeeze
Press
Torturous
Massage
Pressure
Tightening
Possessive
Raucous
Cacophonous
Harmony
Taut
Tension

**xv. Things that Sound Good Until You Imagine Someone Actually Doing Them**

- Shaking their head to clear their thoughts. Think of a wet dog drying itself off. That is what this would look like.

- Rolling their eyes back into their head. All I think of is *The Exorcist*.

- Having their mouth pop open in surprise. Unless something really, *really* surprising has just happened, this should not.

- Someone speaking in a way that their tongue seems to "caress your skin/name." This makes me again think of a dog slobbering all over someone, or else they're wearing a name tag and that person is literally licking it.

- Spending several minutes staring after someone who's left the room. Seconds, sure. Minutes? Um, no. I want you to go to any public place in the world and stare forward with a catatonic look on your face for several minutes. Count how long it takes for someone to ask you if you're all right, assuming that they don't just call for an ambulance to begin with.
Rocking back and forth happily. Again, try doing this in public and see what happens (Parkins, 2012).

Any and all entirely orchestrated moves, such as a character whipping their glasses off angrily or stroking their beard whilst thinking. No one actually does those things; we just see them in films and add them into our writing to convey outdated mannerisms.

xvi. Some Do's and Don'ts of Smut Writing

It's easy to get carried away when writing smut or to get self-conscious and end up writing something that sounds like your mum was looking over your shoulder the whole time. Remember to relax and just do what feels right. If the scene makes you feel hot, it'll probably do the same to your readers. But just in case, here are a few fan fiction pitfalls and tips.

Do describe how your characters are reacting/feeling in detail. There's a time and a place for quiet, controlled sex, and it's usually when your characters are in a public place and might get caught. Otherwise, feel free to have them grunting like beasts and throwing furniture about. Expressive sex is rarely viewed as a bad thing.

Don't be afraid to be realistic. Not all sex is magical, perfect, orgasmic sex where both characters are Porn Star-level Sex Gods who climax at precisely the same time. It can be messy, it can be sloppy, the friction can be too much, it can be painful and the characters can make embarrassing noises. A level of realism can actually make the sex hotter as opposed to spoiling the mood.

Do take that advice up there ^- with a grain of salt. Most people do like for their fantasy sex to be just that: a fantasy. You can use realism to advance the plot line (such as having two characters get walked in on when they didn't bother to lock the door), or you can use it for too much realism, like having someone accidentally burp while kissing their lover. Things like the latter example do happen in real life, and you're welcome to include them, but doing something like that in the middle of a sex scene for no reason can kill your audience's boner.

Don't feel the need to equate dirty talk with name calling or degradation. I read loads of fic when I was younger where characters would call each other sluts and whores when it wasn't a humiliation kink fic, and they were in a monogamous, loving relationship. Humiliation kinks are perfectly fine, but if you're not writing that sort of fic, you don't necessarily need to have one character call the other one a dirty slut just for the sake of doing it. "Oh yes, take my cock, you filthy whore" can be hot in the right circumstances, but if it's in the middle of 'regular' sex, it seems out of place. On a personal note, if a man or woman called me a filthy whore during non-roleplaying sex, I'd burn their clothes in my back garden and then turn them out. Sex is not something you should be made to feel ashamed of unnecessarily.

Do use metaphor (with caution). Comparing the sexual tension between two characters to a string drawn taut or crackling electricity is perfectly fine. Comparing someone's arsehole to the dark, unexplored stretches of an Amazon jungle is probably going to get you put on wtf fanfiction. However, metaphor is one of the most honoured traditions of smut writing, from the crashing waves of the orgasm to the pert, pink buds of a fair maiden's nipples. Use it wisely and regularly.

Don't say that one of your character's voices jumped or dropped several octaves. That is a personal pet peeve of mine, and I see it in fiction all the time. The average human vocal range is one and a half octaves. A trained singer can reach two or three, and at four octaves, Freddie Mercury's voice was considered so exceptional, it's widely believed that very few people can properly sing his songs. Do not say your character's voice lowered several (i.e. three or more) octaves unless they went from a high soprano to a pitch only elephants can hear (Parkins, 2012, Kindle Location 393).
This obviously does not apply to characters who aren't human. You're welcome to say their voice dropped an octave, however.

**Do** make sure that what you're writing is anatomically possible. For example, during gay intercourse where two males are face-to-face, the one who is receiving needs to have their hips at a relatively high angle because the arsehole is further back than a vaginal entrance. During straight sex, if a woman is twisting around to look at a man who's taking her from behind, don't have her go to such a degree that she should theoretically crack her spine. When writing things like this, imagine doing them yourself (or better yet, try to do them). If you can't manage it, chances are your characters can't either.

**Don't** use epithets if you can avoid it. Epithets are other ways of referring to someone, such as saying "the blonde" or "the shorter man". These are incredibly popular in fan fiction, but publishers will make you remove them (Trust me, my novel had 157 corrections of this sort alone). This can be quite difficult to avoid if you're writing male-on-male or female-on-female porn, since you can end up with a sentence like, "He pulled his hands above his head and drew his body up until he was a long, sinewy line" that leave you thinking, "Who the hell did what to who?" The trick here is to use their names and pronouns interchangeably, so you get, "Nik pulled Seth's hands above his head and drew his body up until it was a long, sinewy line."

**Do** get a trusted friend or beta to read over your work for you. There's no shame in using a beta; it's just like having an editor go over a manuscript. They'll tell you if you made any unfortunate typos (like mine. See "Introduction") or if something seems implausible. Be open to constructive criticism, though if anyone is unnecessarily or mean-spiritedly critical, send them my way, and I'll shove a virtual boot up their arse.

**Don't** use words without making sure you know what they mean. For example, loads of people are under the impression that "bemused" means "amused." It means "confused." Nonplussed" can mean surprised or not surprised at all, inflammable and flammable both mean easy to set on fire, nauseous means you're making everyone about you feel sick, droll does not mean dull—it means curious in a way that incites wry amusement, and "all right" is two words. Alright is not all right. Unique means literally one of a kind. Something cannot be "quite unique." It's either a golden flamingo or it's not (Clark, 2012, p. 3).

**xvii. References**


Also see: "You can't POP your cherry (Hymen 101)" by lacigreen on YouTube.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!