

THE ULTIMATE
GUIDE to Writing
MODERN Cozy
Murder Mysteries



HOW TO WRITE
A COZY
MYSTERY

NINA HARRINGTON

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THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO WRITING MODERN
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A Note on Terminology. Although I am from the UK and this book is written in UK English, for the sake of consistency this book uses the US spelling of “cozy” mystery which has been widely accepted as universal.

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for selecting this ultimate guide on how to write a modern cozy murder mystery.

Like you, I love reading crime fiction, including both thrillers and cozy murder mysteries, and have a large personal library of *whodunit* novels on my physical and electronic “keeper shelves”.

For the past 20 years, I have also been a student of story structure. My goal is simple. I want to understand how I can apply story craft to shape a story idea into compelling commercial fiction that will appeal to my ideal target audience.

With this book, I have consolidated my extensive personal notes and reference material on story craft to create a resource you can dip into whenever you need additional information on a specific aspect of developing a cozy mystery novel.

I will be covering all aspects of writing a modern commercial cozy murder mystery novel or screenplay, from developing the concept through to story structure for full-length fiction, including how to use subplots, secondary characters and building a series.

Each chapter is supported by worked examples, outlines, templates and professional writing tips and techniques. Writing exercises are included where appropriate.

Each writer is unique and has their own process. But whether you are an intuitive author who writes themselves into a story, or a plotter who creates a working outline before they create the text, at some point you will need to edit and rework your cozy mystery manuscript into the most effective story form possible.

Two things, however, are clear.

Firstly, the most popular form of cozy mysteries are murder mysteries.

Secondly, this subgenre of popular fiction has unwritten story conventions, tropes, and elements that today's readers will both recognize and expect to see in modern cozy mystery fiction.

Why Modern Commercial Cozy Mysteries?

It is perfectly fine if you want to create a cozy mystery for your own enjoyment and have fun doing so. But why not share your work with other readers who love cozy mysteries as much as you do?

There will always be readers who love golden age mysteries from writers such as Dorothy L. Sayers and Agatha Christie, but there is also a large demand for modern cozy mystery fiction around the world where the sleuth can be a witch, an animal, or a vampire. Or perhaps a combination of all three! Cross-genre, high-concept cozy mysteries have become very popular and provide a perfect escapist journey for the reader.

This wide variety of new niche subcategories in the cozy mystery genre means that there are readers online at this moment, looking for precisely the kind of cozy that you love to read and are planning to write. From historical to contemporary, paranormal to small town, there are readers who have a passion for niche cozy mystery fiction. That is why this book has a section on how to understand the market for cozy mysteries and how you can use that data to find an audience for your work.

My sincere hope is that this book will guide you through the expectations and key elements of cozy mystery fiction and how you can write a compelling story that both hits the expected story beats and remains unique.

No fluff or padding. Just practical information so that you can write your commercial modern cozy murder mystery – fast!

THE MODERN COZY MURDER MYSTERY

THE TEN KEY ELEMENTS OF A MODERN COZY MYSTERY

Just like any other form of fiction, it is important to understand who will be reading your cozy mystery, and, as a result, what they will be looking for.

Who is your ideal reader? Do you have a clear picture in your mind of the person you are writing for?

Convention tells us that cozy mystery readers are overwhelmingly female, based in the United States and aged 40 years and above. This is, of course, a generalization, but works as a useful avatar that you can use to understand your ideal readers and their expectations.

What do readers expect to find when they buy a cozy murder mystery?

The author/publisher is making a very specific promise to the reader when they describe a novel as a cozy mystery.

Readers, just like us, expect to be taken on a unique type of emotional and intellectual journey through the pages of a cozy mystery and that promise needs to be stated on the cover, in the book description and then delivered on the page.

For me, that emotional experience that a cozy mystery should deliver is made up of ten key elements.

1. Humour

For me, humour is an essential component of any cozy mystery, and I expect to discover a light-hearted entertaining read.

There is enough gloom and negativity in the real world around us.

Readers pick up a cozy mystery so that they can escape into another world inside the pages of your book.

Most cozy mysteries have a fun, light tone to balance out the darkness of the murder investigations. There may be witty banter between the sleuth and the sidekick and supporting characters or a funny pet or animal or fun situations and dilemmas arising from character traits, supernatural acts, and family interactions.

2. Family-Friendly Content

Cozy murder mysteries are classified as “clean” family-friendly books, so readers don’t expect to see bad language, racism, blasphemy, drug addition, abuse or violence against children or animals. Even from the killer!

If there is a romance subplot the bedroom door should remain firmly closed. These are not the books for sexually explicit or sexually intimate scenes.

There may be action and even dangerous scenes where the sleuth and the sidekick are in peril as a result of their investigations, but they will not be permanently injured.

In particular, you should avoid the kind of forensic descriptions of crime scenes, gory murder details or graphic violence that you can find in police procedurals, forensic TV shows or mainstream crime books and thrillers.

3. An Interesting Setting or Situation

These novels take the reader away from day-to-day troubles into interesting story worlds. Most include small town settings and/or historical time periods which have layers of familiar details that readers will recognize.

These add to the warm feelings of charm, nostalgia and community connections that come with your setting.

Classic murder mysteries were frequently set in remote locations such as English country houses, run-down large hotels, long-distance trains, cruise ships and islands.

In other words, locations where the entire cast is contained in one place for the length of the novel, free from interference from the local police force.

The murderer, victims, sleuths, and sidekicks were trapped inside a physical pressure cooker of a situation from which they were physically unable to escape. They cannot call for help when one of them is murdered. Phone lines are down. Power may be out. They are forced to investigate and find the killer alone.

This technique is still used in many murder mystery crime novels, TV shows and movies.

For example. ***Private Eyes*** TV show episode S2 E12. ***Getaway with Murder***. There is a violent snow blizzard, and a luxury ski resort is cut-off from the outside world when the hotel owner is found murdered.

Or, as in the 2019 movie ***Knives Out***, the family are assembled at the remote family home to celebrate the 85th birthday of the rich patriarch, when he is found dead the next morning.

The same theme has been used by authors Lucy Foley in her novel ***The Guest List*** and A. M. Castle in ***The Invitation***.

Many cozy mysteries are set in small towns and/or rural or seaside locations where they don't have access to professional homicide units and forensic teams – they may have one under-resourced police team and a local doctor. Tourists and visitors are rare and the murder victim within this small local community clearly knew his or her killer.

Alternatively, a cozy mystery can be set in an area of a larger town or city where there is an equivalent close community of connected individuals who unite to investigate the murder of one of their members.

For example. In Richard Osman's ***The Thursday Murder Club***, the murder takes place in a luxury English retirement village.

This connected group of people simulates the closed country house scenario with an insider knowledge of the location and the local characters. They can then use those insights to find the killer.

4. An Interesting Story Theme

Themes and hooks act as instant short-cuts which quickly tell the reader exactly what kind of story they should expect on the page.

Both the theme and the hook of your work must be attractive to your target audience and automatically signal the charm and nostalgic emotional appeal that your readers will be looking for in a particular niche.

Cozy Mystery Themes

- **Animals**
- **Crafts and Hobbies**
- **Culinary**
- **Historical Settings**
- **Paranormal and Supernatural**

These themes should not distract from the central murder investigation, but add to the worldbuilding and character development for the sleuth and secondary characters.

The theme can then be used to classify your book as falling into a specific niche cozy mystery market.

Most commercially successful cozy mysteries have an ongoing theme which adds interesting layers of depth to the storyline and provides for subplots.

These themes provide new information to the reader about a craft or a skill or hobby that they may not be familiar with.

The main themes are generally classified in physical bookstores and online retailers such as the Amazon store as:

Animal Cozy Mysteries

Does your book include farm animals or pets such as cats and dogs?

Readers love murder mysteries which include house pets, and they are always pictured on the cover of the book.



Cats and kittens seem to be the top sellers, then dogs followed by pets and farm animals. The animal could also be the sleuth, complete with animal sidekicks!

Crafts and Hobbies Cozy Mysteries



Does your sleuth have a particular profession, hobby or interest which could be used as a theme?

For example, the sleuth could own an old inn, run a knitting shop, be a member of a crochet and quilting circle, design couture wedding gowns and hats or work in an art supply shop. Needlecraft hobbies are particularly popular.

What if your sleuth loves to take ballroom dancing or bookbinding classes? Or perhaps she works as a part time pet sitter for friends and neighbours?

She might adore making theatre costumes, rummage around in antique shops and go to belly dancing classes at the weekends.

The list of possibilities is endless, which makes this subcategory very exciting. There is always room for something new!

Culinary Cozy Mysteries



Food and drink themed mysteries are still as popular as ever. This subcategory includes anything from bakeries, cupcake shops, ice cream parlours, bistros, cafes, coffee shops, restaurants, food vans and wine merchants right through to wedding caterers and private chefs. This is a huge subcategory which allows lots of room for new examples with a fresh twist.

Historical Settings



Most popular murder mysteries are contemporary. Readers love to identify with the sleuth and their situation in a small modern community and can see themselves in that character. From the author's point of view this also makes research a lot easier.

The golden age for murder mysteries began in the interwar years in the 1920s and 1930s and this time period is still very popular with readers.

There is a huge range of popular historical murder mysteries set in Edwardian or 1930s England. For example, the Lady Hardcastle Mysteries from T.E. Kinsey and the Lady Eleanor Swift Mystery Series from Verity Bright, and there are many more.

Solving the murder without the aid of the internet and technology means that the sleuth must be particularly skilled, competent, and able to work within the confines of the strict social structures and moral standards of that time.

Extensive research is needed to make these murder mysteries both convincing and emotionally appealing to a modern reader, and the historical details of specific settings must also be meticulously accurate. For example, the practical implications of transport conditions using horse drawn carriages on unpaved roads in rural settings or ocean crossings on early steam ships have to feel real.

Paranormal and Supernatural Mysteries



Cross-over cozy mysteries involving paranormal and supernatural elements such as witches, ghosts, magic, psychic and vampire storylines are becoming an increasingly large part of this genre and there are numerous very successful series using these themes.

The nature of these themes means that you can use elements from these other genres to support the detective and the investigation. They must, of course, be reasonable, believable, and logical within the rules of the story world that you have created for the characters and the murder investigation.

5. A Compelling and Different Story Hook

I like to think that the “hook” of your story is that unique aspect which a cozy mystery reader will instantly recognize as the KEY that unlocks your story world.

For me, the hook is an additional story element that is linked to the theme.

The most successful hooks are what is known as “**high concept**”.

A high concept idea is an idea that can be pitched in one sentence and immediately conveys why it's cool or interesting.

Example One. In **Kitty Confidential by Molly Fitz**, the sleuth has an electric shock from a faulty coffee machine and wakes up to find that she can understand the only witness to a murder – the victim’s cat.

The theme is: Animal Cozy Mystery.

The hook is: the sleuth is a Pet Whisperer and the victim’s cat helps her to discover who murdered its owner.

Example Two. In **The Vampire Knitting Club by Nancy Warren**, the sleuth has inherited her grandmother’s knitting shop, then discovers that her grandmother was murdered then rescued by a group of vampires.

The theme is: Crafts and Hobbies Cozy Mystery. Knitting is a key part of the storyline.

Second theme: Paranormal Vampire Mysteries.

The hook is: the sleuth discovers that she is a witch and works with vampires who live below her knitting shop to investigate the murder of her grandmother.

Vampires who live below a knitting shop? That is cool, different, and interesting.

6. Each Cozy is a Complete Murder Mystery Puzzle

Cozy murder mysteries have a puzzle to solve. There will be at least one murder and often two linked murders in a full-length murder mystery novel.

The murder or other serious crime will usually happen in the first quarter of the book and generate a number of questions which will be answered by the end.

The rest of the book will then track how the sleuth finds the answers to those questions, starting with how this person was killed, why now and then who the killer is.

The murder should be treated with the shock and horror that it deserves. This serves to build the suspense and tension in the story.

Readers like to follow the clues and work out *whodunnit* before or with the sleuth.

This means that all the clues and revelations must be included, but there will also be multiple suspects, red herrings, and distractions for the reader to work through.

This is not the place for detailed descriptions of forensic analyses and the work of large teams of homicide detectives and scene of crime investigators who have limitless resources available to them.

The investigation by our usually amateur sleuth is more cerebral than forensic.

There will be a satisfying conclusion where justice is seen to be done and order restored where the murderer is caught and punished.

The story ends with the arrest of the killer after a dramatic final confrontation, then leaves it there. Law trials and prison scenes are for other types of more hard-boiled crime novels.

David Baldacci, the best-selling crime author, said the genre fits the turbulent political times. "*People inherently don't like folks who do bad to get away with it. In real life they do. But in novels evil is punished and the good guys mostly win,*" he said.

7. An Amateur Sleuth

Note: For the sake of convenience, I am using an example of a female sleuth throughout this book but of course the sleuth could be any gender or creature.

The crime is solved by someone who is an ordinary member of the community.

Our sleuth should be a realistic character that readers can identify with, who may reluctantly agree to get involved, but who has the skills and talents to see the clues, analyse the evidence and solve the crime through common sense and her personal intuition.

The investigation should be well motivated and credible from the start.

These are ordinary people dropped into extraordinary situations by circumstances outside their control and there should be a personal reason why the sleuth is compelled to investigate this murder.

- Why should she put herself into the path of a murderer?
- Does the murder take place in her community or her place of work, for example?
- Or does it impact a close family member who she knows to be innocent of the murder?

The sleuth is usually a woman who runs a business or has a hobby or skill that brings her into close contact with other members of her community.

The sleuth must be able to investigate the crime scene and identify possible suspects because of her knowledge of the community and then interpret clues and revelations based on her background knowledge and personal experience.

To support the sleuth, she may know someone in that community who is linked to professional law enforcement, such as a police officer or private investigator. Someone who can find out the kind of information she cannot access.

The sleuth is going to be the driving force for this book and other books if you plan to create a series of linked novels in the same storyworld, so it is imperative that you spend time working on the background for this character and understand what she wants to achieve at the moment the story opens, her long held desires that have yet to be fulfilled, and her fears and conflicts.

The objective should always be to make the readers sympathize and empathize with the sleuth in the crucial opening scenes. They will be stepping into her shoes and following her thoughts and feelings for the rest of their journey.

The sleuth must be likeable, even if she does have idiosyncrasies of her own. Otherwise, how can the reader identify with her?

One of the reasons why cozy mystery series are so very popular is that the sleuth often has a personal subplot running in the background which is not resolved in full until the end of the series.

8. A Well-motivated Murderer who is a match for our Sleuth.

The story is driven by the murderer. The first murder may have been planned for a long time in advance or be triggered by the actions of the victim, but it is always well motivated.

Psychopaths and sociopaths are rare in cozy mysteries. In most cases, the killer has specifically targeted their victim for a very good reason.

Either way, the murderer's plan to escape detection and justice should be clever enough to be a real challenge to our sleuth, and keep the reader guessing about who did it and why they did it.

This is why some mystery authors start with the killer and develop a detailed outline of who the murder victims are, the motivation for their deaths and how the killer plans to evade justice. This makes sure that the sleuth can be taken down multiple side-tracks but will always find the crucial clues that will lead them to the real murderer.

9. Quirky Sidekicks, Friends and Family

The story will connect the reader with feelings of emotional charm and possibly nostalgia. There is usually a strong sense of the local community and family relationships, backed up by the sleuth's network of friends.

The cast list will include quirky characters that make readers smile if not laugh out loud. This cast of secondary characters will continue across all the books in a continuity series, so that readers can get to know these characters and connect with their lives in this community and/or family. Returning to a series should feel like revisiting old friends you love to spend time with.

Animals and pets can add to the charm and familiarity.

For example. In **Pork Pie Pandemonium: Albert Smith's Culinary Capers** by Steve Higgs, the sleuth's dog is a former police dog who was fired because of his bad attitude. In some scenes, the point of view character switches from the sleuth, Albert Smith, to the dog's point of view at critical points in the murder investigation. The dog acts as a narrator and becomes a real character.

10. Authenticity

There is one further element that is fundamentally important for anyone considering writing a cozy mystery and one that is often overlooked: **a deep and sincere love of this genre.**

For me, it would be impossible to create a convincing and engaging cozy murder mystery if I did not enjoy these stories and want to spend time with the characters and their story worlds.

Cozy murder mystery readers are astute and prolific readers who will easily spot an author who is not taking the genre seriously and creating their best work in a specific cozy niche.

With that in mind, let's move on and understand the current market for cozy murder mystery fiction.

THE MARKET FOR COZY MYSTERY FICTION

Why is it so important to understand the market for cozy mysteries?

Now is the time to ask yourself two key questions:

Why do you want to write cozy mystery, and

What kind of mystery do you love to read and write? What is your niche?

Why do you want to write modern cozy mysteries?

Be honest with yourself.

How you approach writing your cozy mystery depends on understanding the reason why you want to write in this genre and what you want to do with the book when it is complete. For example:

- Do you want to make a living from independently publishing your cozy mysteries as a side-hustle or a full-time writing business?
- Do you want to create a cozy mystery novel and pitch it to a literary agent so they can share your work with editors at publishing houses who will take over the publishing and distribution of your work?
- Do you want to make a mark on society with a unique style or commentary? Perhaps to leave a legacy with the stories that you have been burning to tell.
- Do you simply enjoy writing for its own sake and want to share your stories around the world and the sales are a bonus?
- Or something else? Is this a fun experiment with something different and exciting? Are you taking risks and plan to take the reader somewhere new?

- Do you believe that you are writing for yourself and then hope other cozy mystery book readers will discover your work when the book is finished?

There is no right or wrong path. This has to your individual journey.

But one thing is true.

Way too many fiction authors write the book they want to write and THEN think about how they are going to share that book, market and promote their work and hopefully persuade friends and family to leave a review on the Amazon book page. This only leads to frustration and disappointment and more than a little heartbreak.

“Hope” book marketing is not a strategy for success, no matter what your personal definition of success is.

A far better way is to know in advance that there are readers for the cozy mysteries that you love to read and want to write, and you have the tools and techniques which will help your work to be discovered by ideal readers.

DECIDE ON THE BEST PUBLISHING MODEL FOR YOU AND YOUR WORK.

What can we do as authors to build careers as published authors?

We need to become more prolific and we need to be both educated and business-minded about what is the best publishing model for our work while trying to stand upright on the shifting sand that is today’s publishing industry.

How do the top self-published fiction authors make money?

By treating their writing as a business, where they are in control of every aspect of the book publishing process.

They are “authorpreneurs” who see their love of writing as a start-up business opportunity and are prepared to put in the hours of hard work to make it a successful business, however you define what that success looks like.

To become a successful author in the crowded mystery fiction marketplace, I believe that you must learn how to write, edit, produce, publish, and promote your work so that readers know where to find it.

In other words, you need to develop the mindset of a book publisher.

This means releasing at least four or more books a year, preferably in a series, and slowly building a following so that the next book in the series, or a new series, becomes an auto-buy for readers.

That's one of the reasons why many cozy mystery authors prefer to write shorter novels of 50,000 words or fewer. These books are designed to be fast-paced, page-turning reads delivering a fun and escapist read that can be enjoyed in a few hours.

That is not to say that independent publishing is an easy option.

When a reader purchases your book with their precious hard-earned money, they want to enjoy a professionally produced mystery story with the same quality standards that they would find in a printed book from a traditional publisher.

It is all too easy to feel overwhelmed by how much we have to know about story craft, editing, productivity, the publishing business, and how to become business savvy as a writer entrepreneur.

Building an author platform and readership take time and patience. This is not a quick and easy way to make money. You must accept that you are going to be in the online publishing business for the long haul.

Most of the top commercial genre fiction authors have been writing and publishing for at least five to ten years, building up a back-list of books which are selling every day while they are working on the next new release.

For eBooks, it is now well established that if a reader loves one of your books, then they will want to purchase other books that you have created, especially if these books are linked in some way.

The books need to be online and available at that precise moment. Because if you don't have books available, then the opportunity is lost, and the reader with a short attention span will move on to the next author who does have a trilogy or more, all ready to be enjoyed. Right now. Speed is everything.

Visibility and platform = sales.

Getting noticed in the genre fiction publishing business has never been harder. Do not go down the self-publishing route unless you are prepared to invest a significant amount of time in marketing online and off. You will be fighting hard to attract your ideal reader in an extremely competitive marketplace.

Self-publishing any book requires a significant investment in time and money and most of the process has nothing to do with creative writing.

Every part of this process takes time, energy, and money from the start.

So, how badly do you want this?

How much time can you invest in publishing your work? One hour a day is a great place to start but you can achieve a lot more than you imagine in thirty-minute sessions.

In many cases, self-publishing may not be the best publishing model for your book project and skillset.

Not everyone has the desire to create a start-up small publishing company.

If that is the case, there are numerous digital-first publishers and traditional publishers who will take over the publishing side of the business while you handle the writing, but you will still have to do a lot of the marketing and engage a literary agent to represent you.

That's why I believe that time spent researching the sales market for the kind of fiction you want to write is never wasted. In fact, it can save you time, energy, money, and heartache.

Your goal is simple. To learn about your potential customers/ideal readers and understand what they are buying and what they are interested in.

So, with that in mind, let's look at the market for cozy mysteries.

The Global Mystery, Thriller and Suspense Market

Have you ever read a totally enthralling murder mystery novel and been so carried away with the characters and their story world, that when you turned the last page you asked yourself; *"I wonder if I could write a mystery like that?"*

Mystery, thriller and suspense fiction is the second highest-selling genre in the Kindle Store in the United States after romance fiction. Sales have never been greater, and readers are looking for mystery fiction in all sub-categories and lengths to satisfy their compulsion for this genre.

The good news for writers is there has never been a better time to create your own cozy mystery stories and find readers who will enjoy them. Sales of cozy mysteries on the Amazon.com Kindle store, for example, have been increasing year on year for the past five years.

One of the reasons for the universal popularity of cozy crime fiction is that there is now a huge range of story lines for readers to enjoy, covering a full spectrum of story hooks, settings, themes, and cross-genre elements to meet the tastes of every reader.

This diversity means that there truly is a cozy mystery story for every audience – and for any writer. This sub-genre offers writers very special opportunities to explore stories and characters which are as unique as their imagination can take them. But that enormous diversity creates a problem.

Imagine walking into a bookstore and finding stacks of books of all types all piled up together without any kind of order. It would be impossible to find the book you are looking for without sorting through hundreds of random books.

To make it easier, online bookstores such as Amazon have created a range of virtual bookshelves called Categories where readers can go to find the kind of eBooks and printed books that they love to read. This is the online equivalent to labelled shelves in a bricks and mortar bookstore.



Image credit: [flickr/pfala](https://www.flickr.com/photos/pfala/)

Throughout this book I will be using the Amazon.com USA Kindle eBook store as the reference online bookstore for cozy mystery books. Why? Because it is the largest online bookstore in the world. As a result, it is often the first place that cozy mystery readers visit when they are looking for a new title in a specific niche.

Amazon operates as a powerful search engine where readers can find the ideal mystery they are looking for.

Amazon operates as a powerful search engine and if you want to succeed as a cozy mystery writer, your work should

be listed on the Amazon bookstore.

A book does not have to be exclusive to Amazon, but if you want readers to discover your work then I would strongly recommend loading your book onto the Amazon platform.

Discoverability is crucial.

You may have to drill down several layers to find the perfect category home for the book that you want to write and fully appreciate what readers are looking for in that

niche. Readers must know that your work exists before they can admire your quality book cover and buy and read your book.

Your target readers are looking for a specific type of book and can describe it in the same terms that Amazon uses.

Question. How can you help your ideal reader to find your book on the virtual shelves?

Answer. By being strategic from the start and writing the cozy mystery story that you want to write, but with a clear understanding of how you are going to distribute that book so that the audience for that story is going to find your work.

In other words, you must know precisely which subcategories or sub-subcategories are the target virtual shelves for your mystery on the Kindle store.

You have to love reading and writing that kind of story.

That is a given. After all, you are going to be building up an audience and a following for your work online, and your readers will expect you to continue writing in that niche, even if it is not as popular as it was six months ago.

I am not saying that writing to market is the only way to be successful. Far from it. But it is one example of authors who have:

- proactively identified that there is an audience for their work in advance,
- they enjoy writing those stories, and
- they have stories which will fit that niche market.

They know that there is an existing large audience for their work, so they are not “writing into the blue” then hoping that someone will buy and read their eBook apart from their friends and family.

The story still must be well-crafted with compelling characters, so that readers will enjoy the work, but it also has to meet the genre expectations of that particular sub-genre.

How does Amazon help readers to find their ideal cozy mysteries?

In the Amazon.com (USA) Kindle eBook store you will find Cozy Mysteries filed as a specific subcategory on the **Mystery Virtual Shelf** under **Mystery, Thriller and Suspense**.

Kindle eBooks. Mystery, Thriller & Suspense, then Mystery.

Within Mystery you will currently find books listed under: African American. Amateur Sleuth. Collections & Anthologies. Cozy. Hard-Boiled. Historical. International Mystery & Crime. LGBT. Police Procedurals. Private Investigators. Series. Traditional Detectives. Women Sleuths

Let's focus on Mystery, Thriller and Suspense>Mystery>Cozy.

And within the Cozy subcategory there are three sub-subcategories.

Mystery, Thriller and Suspense>Mystery>Cozy>Culinary.

Mystery, Thriller and Suspense>Mystery>Cozy>Crafts and Hobbies.

Mystery, Thriller and Suspense>Mystery >Cozy>Animals.

Notice that there are also separate subcategories/virtual bookshelves for:

Mystery, Thriller and Suspense >Mystery>Amateur Sleuths.

This is the favourite classification for many murder mysteries, especially those that may not fit perfectly into other subcategories. Independent publishers, small presses and traditional publishers are all represented here. This is the perfect category to find new readers and discover new titles.

Mystery, Thriller and Suspense>Mystery>Women Sleuths and

Mystery, Thriller and Suspense>Mystery>Private Investigators.

Many commercial bestselling crime novels from traditional publishers feature female sleuths and private detectives and these subcategories are dominated by mainstream crime writers such as Greg Olsen, Ann Cleeves, Rachel Caine, J D Robb and Lisa Grey which makes it difficult for murder mystery titles to gain traction.

Mystery, Thriller and Suspense>Mystery>Historical.

The golden age of murder mysteries is listed here, such as the Lord Peter Wimsey Mysteries by Dorothy L. Sayers, works by Ellis Peters and Ken Follett, but there are fewer titles in this subcategory and writers of historical murder mysteries are a perfect fit for this classification.

Mystery, Thriller and Suspense>Mystery>Traditional Detectives and

Mystery, Thriller and Suspense>Crime> Murder Fiction. These subcategories include Sherlock Holmes right through to modern police procedurals.

Cozy mysteries are also included in other categories on the Amazon.com Kindle store, including **Literature and Fiction>Women’s Fiction>Mystery, Thriller and Suspense.**

There is therefore considerable overlap and cross-over with elements in cozy mysteries, but books in these subcategories may not conform to the ten-point personal definition of cozy mysteries I described earlier.

There is one trend which is not included in the Cozy Mystery listing – and that is the **Paranormal theme.**

Murder mysteries with paranormal and supernatural themes are now extremely popular. They include murder investigations that involve paranormal elements and characters, such as witches, vampires, ghosts, and psychics.

You will find that most paranormal cozy mysteries have a second or third theme which ensures that they are listed in one of the three main cozy mystery subcategories – animals, crafts and hobbies and culinary.

Amazon also has a separate subcategory under Mystery-Suspense for Supernatural and Paranormal mysteries.

The search path is: **Kindle Store < Kindle eBooks < Mystery, Thriller & Suspense-Suspense, then Ghosts, Horror, Occult, Paranormal, Political or Psychological.**

If you select **Paranormal**, there are sub-subcategories for: **Psychics, Vampires and Werewolves and Shifters.**

How Competitive is Your Cozy Mystery Niche?

Before you dive into the detailed marketing research, it is always useful to consider how many other books are already listed in the category where your book is the perfect fit.

These books are both your competition and an indication of the popularity of that niche subgenre.

You should always focus on two things:

Factor #1. What subgenre is the most relevant and the best fit for the books you love to read and write.

Where can you find the kind of mysteries that you love to read? Where are they placed on the Kindle store?

Factor #2. How competitive that category is. How many other eBooks are published in that category? This should give you an indication of the level of demand for your kind of book.

A quick way to calculate how hard it would be to dominate a category is see how much competition there is within that category, which is reflected in the ranking of the books in that category.