

*From Best Selling Martial Arts Authors*

Lawrence Kane & Kris Wilder

# Don't write That Book!

Write a better book  
other martial artists  
will buy and read

**Kris Wilder and Lawrence Kane**

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Write a better book other martial artists will buy and read**

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*“Build it and they will come.”*

— From the movie *Field of Dreams*

*“‘Build it and they will come’ is the greatest lie ever propagated on potential authors.”*

— Kris Wilder

## Introduction

The belief that if you build it they will come is a complete and utter fallacy, especially when it comes to publishing. Unfortunately thousands upon thousands of authors across the world pour their blood, sweat, and tears (sometimes literally) into their work based upon this myth. Without proper preparation and promotion even the best book on the planet will be read by few and purchased by less. It takes forethought to navigate the world of publishing and deliver a product that will actually reach its intended audience.

Let’s take a look at the entertainment industry for a comparison that illustrates this point. One of the most successful television shows of all time was *Seinfeld*. *Seinfeld*, however, had poor ratings in its first season and faced the very real possibility of cancellation. Nevertheless the network took a risk, promoted the heck out of the show and, well... the rest is history. But this success did not come lightly. It required good casting, solid storylines, and witty dialogue in addition to a well thought out advertising campaign.

Another TV show that you might be familiar with, *Firefly*, had all the same strengths of casting, storylines, and dialogue. It was so good, in fact, that one could make a strong argument that it was one of the best written shows in the history of television, yet it was not supported by the Fox network. They changed the air date and timeslot three times and even released several episodes out of sequence, a death knell for any show. It was canceled in the first season. Some episodes had already been produced but were never aired; they were only released on DVD and video-streaming years later. Nevertheless *Firefly* has become a science-fiction “classic” with a passionate fan-base (many of whom found out about the show after it had already been taken off the air) and a spinoff movie *Serenity*. In short, *Firefly* rocked, but it never made it past the first season, dying before it was ever truly born.

These two television examples demonstrate that a quality effort does not necessarily equal success. Like *Seinfeld* both of us, as authors and martial artists, have been fortunate to have found a supportive publisher. In fact, to give YMAA Publication Center a little free publicity, unlike other publishers we have worked with they are more than happy to collaborate with us to develop and refine titles, cover art, back cover text, and marketing campaigns, among other things. They take a very light hand throughout the entire processes, editing just enough to make the final product better than the manuscript we start out with. YMAA stands head-and-shoulders above other publishers we’ve worked with. Their process offers less free reign than self-publishing, of course, but the tradeoff is a long term business plan, expert advice and sponsorship, competent editing and proofreading, and personalized

support. Their marketing department sends promotional copies to expert reviewers, submits our work to industry competitions (e.g., *USA Book News* Best Books Award; *ForeWord Magazine* Book of the Year Award), and assures that we get enough visibility to stand out from the crowd. With the rise of the self-publishing/vanity press industry, that's no mean feat nowadays.

The end result is that we are both bestselling authors (it's not like we'll ever be the next Tom Clancy or Stephen King, as martial arts is a niche market, but everything we've written thus far ranks within the top 5% of all books sold<sup>1</sup>). Considering what it takes to get a quality book out the door and support it throughout its lifecycle, our total return on investment is probably somewhere in the neighborhood of a few pennies an hour, yet if we had to do it all over again we absolutely would. Successful publishing has opened doors for us that we would never even have known existed before.

We've made a little money, sure, but most importantly we've actually made a difference in people's lives. Writing has enabled us to build a network of authors and experts, many of whom have become close friends, trained with outstanding practitioners in a variety of martial styles, been guests on nationally syndicated TV and radio shows, had articles published in periodicals worldwide, and been interviewed by numerous reporters and podcasters. (Lawrence was interviewed in English by a reporter from a Swiss newspaper for an article that was published in French, and finds that oddly amusing.)

You already know that we are writers, of course, but we have both coached aspiring writers and participated in editorial board evaluations to help our publisher determine which manuscripts to invest in, and Lawrence reviews books professionally for *Clarion Review* and *ForeWord Magazine* too, so we've sat on both sides of the table.

Because our names are pretty well known in the industry we are frequently contacted by practitioners who want to have their martial arts book published (and a few novelists too, though we're not focusing on that genre here). Early in our careers we were fortunate to have received advice and counsel from industry leaders like Loren Christensen, Marc MacYoung and Iain Abernethy. We want to pay that forward, so we happily field those calls and e-mails. The conversations tend to follow some basic themes, inevitably turning to mechanics; not the actual act of writing per se, but the mechanics of how to go about getting published. Now let us be clear that mechanics are important, but they're not nearly as important as the three commonly overlooked items which we believe are the overarching keys to profitable publication (which is why we wrote this article, of course).

When it comes to making a successful book, the three vital areas are (1) title, (2) cover, and a specific attribute of the content, (3) an injunction. These three things are rarely given the weight that we believe they merit, even by most professionals. We'll go into the details shortly, but it is our firm hope that you will take these three elements into consideration and ponder them deeply.

Can you publish a book without them? Sure. But virtually no one will read it. Before you proceed any farther with the process of developing your manuscript you will need to understand these things and keep them in mind.

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<sup>1</sup>Which sounds really impressive until you learn that it simply means selling more than 5,000 copies.

In reading this treatise you will find that we are direct, sometimes brutally honest. The reason for this tone is simple: authors are often so enveloped in the creative process that they tend to skip over or give lip-service to the elements of a successful book. That attitude will guarantee that you will fail. Please understand that we are trying to save you heartache, grief, time and money. We are not attempting to dissuade you from writing or publishing your manuscript. What we are asking you to do is to listen to the distillation of what we have learned through painful trial and error. Incorporate our expensive lessons into your process and you will give yourself a shot at greater success than we have ever had.

It is only through hard work, a few lucky breaks, and the magnanimous, selfless assistance from others who are a little farther in front of us in the process that we have reached any level of what might be called success in our efforts to convey our vision of the totality of martial arts as we see it in the written word. It is our privilege to pass some of the keys to our success along to you.

### Only three things

To have a successful book there are really only three key elements that you need to have:

- ✦ an outstanding title
- ✦ a fantastic cover
- ✦ an injunction.

These things are essential; without them your greatest endeavor no matter how insightful, creative, original, well-meaning, well-written, or well-intended is going to fail.

There are numerous manuals out there that describe step-by-step what you need to know in order to turn your ideas into a printed and/or electronic book. We will leave the mechanics of that process to your publisher. Assuming you take the “traditional” route, their editorial/submission guidelines will be listed on their website. Once you’ve made a sale they will have professionals to walk you through the process.

The challenge, of course, is that the traditional publishing route typically takes two to three years (sometimes longer) between submitting a manuscript and receiving a finished product. Self-publishing is faster, but comes with a different set of obstacles to overcome. You will need to decide which path to take.

The upside of traditional publishing includes professional editing, layout, distribution, and marketing, yet the downside includes less control and lower royalty percentages (assuming you even make it through the slush pile) to name a few. Further, if you want to be successful you will need to invest just as much time and energy into guerilla marketing/self-promotional campaigns with a “name” publisher as you will if you do the whole process yourself. The main difference is that they know who to talk to in order to get you a booking on nationally syndicated shows, something that’s virtually impossible to do all by yourself.

If you have decided to go it alone, you can find what you need to know from any of the various self-publishing specialists, the Lulu’s, CreateSpace’s, and Xlibris’s of the world. One of the reasons that

these companies spend so much time on the mechanics is, well these are the questions that everyone knows to ask:

- What software and version do I need to submit it with?
- What format and line spacing do I need?
- What is an ISBN number and how do I get one?
- How many pages should it be?
- How many photos do I need?
- How do I handle model releases?
- What resolution should my JPEGs be?

All of these are good questions and valid questions which can be answered consistently and concisely by many manuals produced by self-publishing companies. They are providing a service and a good one at that, you need clarity to the mechanical process of getting a book published.

When it comes to self-publishing, you can go to a large house, a few of which we've already mentioned. They will print on demand and ship your book whenever you or a customer orders it. And they do it almost immediately, a gratifying experience. Or you can go to smaller self-publishing shops that are not as fast but have a more personal level of customer service. That does not mean that we're degrading larger houses. It simply means that because of the volume they deal with, they cannot have the man-hours and the staff available to answer every question that arises when you are trying to get your book published.

Understand that you're going into an emerging industry. And, like any new industry, it has its own lexicon, its own way of doing things. Some of the things that are done make perfect sense, while others are actually remnants of relic behavior. These relic behaviors belong to the time of Gutenberg, not relevant to today's publishing, yet the industry still clings to them. For better and worse, this is who you will be dealing with.

### Do you need an agent?

Some people feel that getting an agent, somebody who works in the publishing industry is an option, even a requirement. We're here to tell you that it is not. Agents are interested in money. They are mercenaries—not that we're saying that in a bad way—the more money you make, the more money they make. Their income is based on your productivity and the quality of your work because very frankly, they cannot sell something that has no market. Which brings us to our genre a niche within a niche: martial arts. These books represent a small, narrow bandwidth, a niche of a niche.

There simply isn't a large market for martial arts. Even the bestselling martial arts books in the world are miniscule in comparison to anything John Grisham has ever written. An agent is interested in a John Grisham. An agent is interested in pretty much anything Donald Trump has to say, the memoirs of Hillary Clinton, or even a book by a murderer, O.J. Simpson. Why? Because those are the kinds of books that make money.

The formula is simple, deep footprint + broad appeal + name recognition = money. Let's take a look at the top selling books of all time, just to get an anchor point. The five bestsellers ever include:

1. *The Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens (this book has been in publication for 154 years and sold more than 200 million copies)
2. *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien (first published in 1954, this book has sold more than 150 million copies and subsequently been made into a feature film)
3. *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (this book has sold more than 140 million copies)
4. *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien (also made into a feature film, this book has sold over 100 million copies)
5. *Dream of The Red Chamber* by Cao Xueqin (the longest published book on the short list, it was first made available in 1754 and has subsequently sold more than 100 million copies)

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_best-selling\\_books](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_best-selling_books)

If you take a moment and go to the Wikipedia page that we've sourced you will find an extensive list of bestsellers broken into categories by millions of sales. Nowhere on that list is Bruce Lee, and his world-famous *Tao of Jeet Kun Do* (or any of our books either for that matter).

Now you might be saying to yourself, "Yeah, but I'm not in it for the money." Great! That's not a problem. But if that's your only motivation you should stop reading this right now because everything we're going to say from here on out will have no value for you.

Still reading? Good. Our admonishment is that you need to change your mindset immediately. Take different path. Create a simple PDF file that you can share with your friends, your students, or anybody else that might have interest in what you have to say and give it away, or better yet, sell it to them for a couple dollars. You will be farther ahead financially, and ultimately much happier than if you continue with your attempt to publishing book. Vanity publishing ain't cheap.

If, on the other hand, you'd actually like to see some return for your efforts, read on...

## **The three vital elements of a good book**

We've already teased it out, but now we'll delve into the details. To recap, the three vital elements of a good book, one that will actually sell, are:

1. An outstanding title
2. A fantastic cover
3. An injunction

### An outstanding title

Stay away from the academic title of death. If you have written a deep, meaningful, scholarly tome the natural inclination will be to gravitate toward a title that reflects that depth of thought and understanding that was poured into your manuscript. That is a good thing. Conveying that depth so that reader will know the academic value of what they're about it purchase is a good thing too. However, it's also the wrong thing... in the marketplace of ideas. While it might make logical sense to select an academic title as a descriptor, as a sales tool, a way to stand out from the millions of other books consumers can choose from, it's a really, really bad idea.

This path, the path we call “Academic Title Death” will ensure that your book is dead on arrival. Boring, protracted academic titles belong in university bookstores where students have no other choice but to purchase them for their classes. These are monstrosities are written by professors who have to crank books out in order to further their careers (Remember the old maxim publish or perish?) and their titles tend to be designed to imply heft and academic strength.

Unfortunately they don’t sell beyond the hallowed halls of academia, and only because there is no other choice. Students pay exorbitant fees for titles such as *Doors to Interactive Communication: a Historical Introduction to Third World Associations within the Written Word*. That’s a title that sticks in your throat like a dry saltine cracker; not a pleasurable experience. Students may be forced to purchase that drivel, but consumers have other options. We want vibrant information presented in an engaging way. If given the choice, consumers will always choose an exciting title over a dry academic one.

Take Lawrence’s first book, *Martial Arts Instruction: Applying Educational Theory and Communication Techniques in the Dojo*. It began as a thesis and received high academic praise and critical review. In fact, at the time it was published it became the only book written by a non-PhD ever to be featured by the Center for Applications of Psychological Type in the Isabel Briggs Myers Memorial Library in Gainesville Florida. Pretty impressive, huh? Perhaps, but it is also Lawrence’s worst selling book. Despite being released nearly a decade later, *The Little Black Book of Violence* outsold it in just two months.

Choose an academic title at your own risk.

Another title to be wary of are those we like to call “Inside Baseball.” This refers to the statistics that baseball managers and fans like to keep. Examples of these types of statistics are: RISP - Runner is Scoring Position (a runner on 1st base is not considered in scoring position), or XBH - Extra Base Hits (A players total hits greater than singles. A single is hitting the ball and getting to first base only). Those are just a couple of examples, but you can see how inside baseball can be confusing and daunting for the casual fan.

When it comes to martial arts books, an Inside Baseball title is just as bad as an Academic Death Title. These are titles that often don’t mean anything to a person on the first bounce. When readers are forced to try to decipher a title they almost always put the book back on the shelf (or skip past the website thumbnail) unread. An example could be something along the lines of *ShinKagi Testu Ken Karate: The Path to Power*. This title automatically excludes people who don’t know what these Japanese phrases mean, a brutal death-blow to sales. Further, the Inside Baseball title implies that if your reader is not a member of the club or organization, then the book is simply not for him or her.

They will think, “This is not for me” or “I don’t do this style so it is unlikely to help me” and they will spend their money elsewhere. To further complicate the decision as to whether or not to purchase your book, the prospective buyer makes the next mental leap, “...and even if it was able to help me, it means that I have to set aside what I already have been doing.”

An Inside Baseball title will ensure that you have a garage full of your books you can’t sell, most of which you will give away. That means giving your time and your money away to somebody who has a passing interest in what you have to say, someone who might take a look at it someday, maybe.

A fantastic title resonates with potential readers. It piques their interest. It captures enough of their attention long enough that they want to learn more. Think of it as a resume, it's not enough to get you a job in and of itself, but it has to be strong enough to get you in the door or you'll never have a shot at closing the deal during an interview.

Titles can be hard, oftentimes taking weeks or even months to get "right," but they are well worth the time and effort. Market research and focus groups can help you get them right too.

### A fantastic cover

You've got one second to impress a potential buyer. Really. One second. You're not a marquee name (and neither are we), so no one's going to receive an e-mail from Amazon telling them that your book is available and say, "Oh, I didn't know so-and-so had a new book out. That's interesting to me. I'm going to check it out." No one is going to see your name on a bookshelf and find themselves unable to walk away without picking it up and leafing through a few pages. That's just not going to happen. You have to have a marquee name to attract automatic attention, and even then it's not universal. We used John Grisham's name earlier. Most folks know that he wrote such books as *The Firm* and the *Pelican Brief*, both of which were given the Hollywood treatment and made into movies starring A-List actors such as Tom Cruise and Julia Roberts, yet there are a lot of people out there who have never heard of him. We can guarantee that they've never heard of you either.

As authors we read quite a bit. Some of it is research and some of it is recreational. For pleasure reading Kris is attracted to a completely different type of book than Lawrence enjoys. Kris likes to read non-fiction history and instructional books, whereas Lawrence spends a lot of time with fiction and has had a love of Sci-Fi since he was a child. These two worlds are completely different.

One time Kris was trying to explain a book, *The Tracker* by Tom Brown, Jr., to Lawrence. The book is about the author's education as a tracker in the Pine Barrens a forest in New Jersey. It took Kris a minute or two to explain the background of the book, why he thought it was important, and why it would be valuable for Lawrence to read it. This is an example of a one-on-one, peer-to-peer relationship that allows for communication of the essence of the book, "This is what you're going to get out of it. This is why I think you should buy this book." As you build a fan base this type of interaction can become your biggest sales driver. But, it starts with someone being intrigued enough to buy your book in the first place, and liking it enough to convince his/her friends to give it a read as well. It has to be awfully good to push it on friends who have different interests.

John Grisham is a marquee name. You see his name emblazoned across the top of the book above the title in larger letters just like you would see an A-list actor's name above the title of their movie. The name alone is an enormous draw. Becoming a marquee name and having your name placed above the title of the book is unlikely to ever happen. You may earn royalties, but it is unlikely that you will ever get an advance for a book you haven't even started yet like John Grisham or any other marquee author does.

As we move down the pecking order we get to the example of *The Tracker*. Clearly a niche book, it is only going to appeal to people who spend time in the woods, or wilderness as a whole. It is unlikely that Tom Brown's ever received in advance for any of his books because he writes for a niche market. Nevertheless, his books continue to be classics, filled with information, real life stories, adventures,

and thrills of surviving in the wild with little more than a pocket knife for days and weeks at a time. Any martial arts book you write is going to be more like Brown's work, or ours, than it will ever be like Grisham's.

We know that you've poured your proverbial heart and soul into your manuscript. It is a culmination of your years of training, your experience, and your insight. Make no mistake about it; we recognize your manuscript as "your baby." In an episode of *Seinfeld*, Jerry was introduced to a newborn in the presence of its doting parents. Upon realizing that the child was ugly all he could muster was, "That's some baby." The truth of the matter is that your "baby" has to not only be gorgeous, but it also has to be dressed in cute clothing, do adorable antics, and "go viral" for you to make any money from it.

The first step is getting folks interested. In today's short-attention-span-theatre world you have one second, perhaps a little less, for your cover to make an impression. In that vital second a potential reader will either pick up the book in the bookstore, or click on the link to explore more. That second is vital. It's not just a good visual; it's also a visual that works both as a thumbnail for e-books and full size for the printed version, a significant challenge without forethought, planning, and experience.

Our book *How to Win a Fight* was published by Gotham, a subsidiary of Penguin the world's largest publishing house. It has both an unfortunate title (not a horrible one but not a particularly good one either) and an uninspiring cover. Despite the fact that Gotham had an aggressive marketing plan which included booking us on Howard Stern and Fox News, among others, and we did a ton of promotional work on our own, it did not sell nearly as well as any of us (publisher, agent, and authors) would have liked.

Remember, high water floats all boats, so the better a book sells the more money everyone makes. Our interests are aligned. We work just as hard to sell every book no matter who the publisher is, so when our book from a major publishing house that invested heavily in marketing, *How to Win a Fight*, is outsold by one put out by a niche publisher, *The Little Black Book of Violence*, it appears that there's something wrong with that equation. They cover the same subject matter, speak to a similar audience, and have overwhelmingly positive reviews. So, what's different? Our assertion is that it's a superior title and cover art.

When it comes to automobiles, Kris loves Camaros. He relates, "I've always loved Camaros, if I could get my hands on a 68 SS my life would be complete. I can't really explain why I love Camaros; it's something about the body style and the roar of the engine. I can't put into rational terms why I like Camaros so much, they just resonate with me."

You can see by his statement that it is an affair of the heart. You can't negotiate with the heart. The heart knows what it wants and it usually gets it. A book's cover is the same way. It has to reach the heart, not the mind. We can't emphasize this enough. That's the major difference between the tremendous success of *The Little Black Book of Violence* and the underwhelming performance of *How to Win a Fight*. The basic elements of good cover include:

- **Void** – this means that the cover art must be clean, concise, and uncluttered. The heart does not have words; don't try to speak to it. Go on Amazon and scroll through thumbnails of bestselling books. Even when shrunk to small size, those that make good use of the void pop out from the crowd.

- **Words** – even though you have a book comprised of some 70,000 words or more, the words on the cover of the book have to be few, direct, and clear. When you think that you have cut the words down to the bare bones go back and cut again. For covers—both front and back—less is more.
- **Investment** – the cover is one place where you really, really want a professional. You can come up with some ideas of what you think would be good cover art but at the end of the day give it to someone who makes their living at it. If you go through a traditional publisher that will be a given, but if you take the self-publishing route chances are good you'll want to do that yourself too. Don't. There are millions of graphic artists out there with degrees and experience. Use them. You can contract directly or go to a crowdsourcing site and make it a competition. You surely wouldn't want a graphic artist to come to your school and teach martial arts classes for you, right? He simply wouldn't know what to do. It's ludicrous to do the reverse as well.

If you want to persist with the idea of designing your own cover simply go on the web and take a look at big publishing house books. Take a look at the cover art, and then go look at the self-published cover art. The difference might not be able to be seen initially, but you intuitively understand which one was done by professional and which one was done in somebody's basement. Like the Kris' Camaro-love you might not be able to explain it logically, but intuitively it's easy to see the differences.

Professionals know how the human eye and human mind work. They know how to impact people's emotions through use of color, symbolism, and implied movement. That is what makes such a powerful difference between amateur and professional layouts. Oftentimes it's a subtle change in positioning or tone or font that readers can only feel, not explain. It's not just the artwork; it's the totality of the cover. Does it always work? No, of course not as we found out the hard way with *How to Win a Fight*, but you will have vastly better odds hiring a professional than you will by going it alone.

A final word on covers: It is okay to use focus groups, but don't ask your friends what they think. They're your friends; consciously or not they will lie to you.

### An injunction

The Technology, Entertainment and Design conference (TED) has a catch-phrase, "Ideas worth spreading." Our assumption is that you're familiar with the TED conference videos available on the web. If you're not, you should probably make yourself familiar with them because there are extraordinary in many ways and many levels ([www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)). The thing that makes these lectures so good is not so much that they are put on by quality people or packed with profound ideas, many forums share that quality.

What really makes them special is that they have created something they call The TED Commandments. These "commandments" assure high quality, entertaining, and enlightening content.

## The TED Commandments:

1. Thou shalt not simply trot out the usual shtick
2. Thou shalt dream a great dream or show forth a wondrous new thing, or share something thou hast never shared before
3. Thou shalt reveal my curiosity and thy passion
4. Thou shalt tell a story
5. Thou shalt freely comment on the utterances of other speakers for the sake of blessed connection and exquisite controversy
6. Thou shalt not flaunt thine ego. Be thou vulnerable speak of thy failure as well as thy success.
7. Thou shalt not sell from the stage: neither thy company, thy goods, thy writings, nor thy desperate need for funding; lest thou be cast aside into outer darkness
8. Thou shalt remember all the while: laughter is good
9. Thou shalt not read thy speech
10. Thou shalt not steal the time of them that follow thee

These ten commandments shape the container in which the speaker is putting their information. We think that several of the TED Commandments are excellent guidelines for you to follow in the preparation of your manuscript as well. Let's begin at the top with "Thou shalt not simply trot out the usual shtick."

There are 500,000 martial arts books out there (were not sure if it is truly 500,000, we just made that number up, but we're sure that it is directionally correct). Of those 500,000 or however many books there are out there, 499,789 of them are saying the same thing, the same identical thing. And every one of those authors was absolutely, fundamentally, positively certain within their heart of hearts that they had a new take on how to make a fist. Or how to apply a downward block. Or whatever...

The fact of the matter is it is unlikely that you have something truly unique. After all, there are only so many ways to make a fist. Somebody has already explained how to do it, likely in something published during the 50s or 60s when half the world didn't already know how to do that... This brings us back to that PDF manual we were talking about earlier. If you don't have something truly original to say the best place for your material is in that format. If you're going to try to explain something that has already been done, at least do it in an inexpensive way.

Look at it this way; technology and information continually outstrip both industry and government. Industry does not always move particularly adroitly, and the federal government (not just ours, but any of them) isn't exactly a paragon of velocity and agility. Both of these entities lack the ability to stay in front of technology. Technology has always progressed faster than our ability to take full advantage of it. That is even truer today than it has ever been, so if you're living with a 1975 perception of how information is disseminated you are making a horrendous error.

What are we getting at? Publishing, of course... In 1975, if you were lucky you might find something in a brick and mortar bookstore, but for the most part in order to get any written information on the art of karate, judo, kung-fu or whatever you had to send an envelope with a money order to the publisher and wait six to eight weeks for the product to arrive via snail mail (they just called it mail back then). Further, you had to drive to your bank in order to purchase that money order in the first place; there

were no credit cards or internet to facilitate the process. Purchase a stamp, mail the envelope, and then wait. If you forgot to include shipping and handling along with the cover price, you were out of luck. After all that, when you received the book and opened it up what you actually got was one instructor's interpretation of how to make a fist... or a down block... or whatever. The process was expensive, laborious and narrow in bandwidth.

Today, less than forty years later, we look at that process and wonder how we could have endured it. Nowadays you can pull your smartphone out of your pocket during your bus ride home from work or school, connect to the web, and have access to virtually any information you want within a minute. On Youtube, Vimeo, or the like you can find countless demonstrations by countless instructors, both good and bad, showing how to make a proper fist. The speed difference between these two models is extraordinary, one minute versus 362,880 minutes (6 weeks).

Want to make a fist, toughen the skin over your striking surfaces, become suppler, faster, or hit harder? Search and it is there. Virtually whatever you decide you need to assist you in your martial arts training can be found online. So the fact of the matter is that if the content of your book is what we call, for illustrative purposes "how to make a fist" you should stop now. There is no reason for anybody to buy your book because it's all open-source today. It's all out there on a video platform for free and at a rate you cannot compete with.

After reading this you might be thinking, "Well I have an opinion and I believe it is significant." Well, not to be rude, but everybody's got an opinion. So what? At this point in the process you need to discern if the material that you are presenting is unique in a qualitative way. Never forget that you're competing with free content. There must be a true value proposition for potential readers to hand over their hard-earned money to obtain your product.

Being married to an idea is a bad marriage. Let us flesh that statement out a little bit. The first question you need to ask yourself is, "Does the world need this book?" Not "I want to write a book," which is an internal and myopically-focused orientation to the process. You need to have an external orientation. The end result of your efforts needs to be something new, something unique. Something that provides value somebody else would be willing to pay for.

We'd argue that Sir Isaac Newton didn't write *The Principia*<sup>2</sup> because he thought it was a good idea. He wrote it because he knew that the presentation of the information that he had was essential to the growth of the sciences. Why did Wycliffe translate the Bible from Latin to English? Not because it was something he simply wanted to do, but rather because he believed that the information contained in the book should be able to be accessed for everyone, not just the educated elite.

Newton and Wycliffe are two examples of authors who took an external-orientation to writing. If after reading this you catch yourself responding, "But I have something to give to people," go back and take a look at what you just said. Your thought begins with the work "I." That's still an internal orientation. Your premise needs to begin with the thought that the work is needed in martial arts

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<sup>2</sup>Containing Newton's three famous laws of motion, *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (mathematical principles of natural philosophy), published in 1687, is considered one of the most important works in the history of science.

because\_\_\_\_\_. If you can fill in the blank without using the word “I”, you’ve begun to get on the right track. When readers see value, they might actually buy stuff.

Okay, getting past self-aggrandizement toward external-orientation is a good start. Now let’s move on to the second TED commandment, “Thou shalt dream a great dream or show forth a wondrous new thing, or share something thou hast never shared before.”

Now, the likelihood of you actually having something new to say in regard to the martial arts that is not already available in some other format, whether it be the written form, the audio form, the video form is, well, frankly unlikely. People want wondrous new things or they want to hear things that they have never heard before, never seen before, or experienced. The fundamentals of your martial art might be paramount for your students, but they are of little interest to readers.

Now we have to admit that it grates on us to even say such a thing, but the fact of the matter is that you know and we know that the art is found in the discipline, the diligence of going back to the floor and learning day after day, digging deeper and finding new meaning on our own individual path. By the time you come to the place where you are experienced enough to begin writing a book you are likely to be the only person of the group you started training with who is still an active practitioner. One of the few, anyway, as “life” tends to get in the way, interests wane, bodies change, and we all get older.

But here you are writing a book about martial arts. You’re one of the few who reach that point. You are proud of your accomplishments. And, we would hope, you have dreams of creating something wondrous and new. Your book will provide a new vision, a new take, at least you think you have a new take. But how do you know? Do a little research using what are called the publishing industry calls, “comps,” or comparables. In other words, find out what else has been written on your subject matter.

Before we go any further, here’s some important context. Traditional publishing is run by gamblers. We don’t mean that as a slight in any way; publishers invest their time, money, editors, graphic designers, layout specialists, production workers, promotion teams, and to a great extent their reputations, all betting that your product is going to sell. In return for this they’re going to give you a percentage of profits as royalty payments. And maybe an advance against earnings if you’re really, really special (mostly as in well-known but sometimes just extraordinary). If they are willing to sign a contract, the publisher is placing a bet on you. And, they’ll naturally want to hedge their bets by leveraging their experience.

These publishers stay in business because they have a pretty good idea about what sells and what does not, so they will make changes and requests of you, pushing you toward a tried and true formula that reduces their risk and maximizes their return on investment. One of the first things that a publisher will do before signing a deals is take a deep look at comps. The thought process goes this way, “What is this new proposal like? What will the finished product be similar to and how well did that book sell?”

If you're planning on self-publishing, you're taking a risk. You have in essence, become your own publisher. This is where most self-published authors go astray. They don't think to check and see what others have done and how well they sold<sup>3</sup>.

Here is a simple test: If a publishing house is not interested in your book, you should probably not have an interest in it either.

That's a pretty insensitive statement, especially when we're talking about your manuscript, the fruit of countless hours of your labor, but if you've been persistent yet still received rejection letters from multiple publishers in your industry, you should seriously rethink your mode of publication. Or toss what you've done and start over.

There's a reason that self-publishing is often called vanity publishing. It is vain. As the dictionary definition states, vanity is "Having or showing an excessively high opinion of one's appearance, abilities, or worth." Wow, those are harsh words, huh? But then again, we're not here to sugarcoat the process. We are here to pose direct questions, to elicit honest answers, and to set you up for success as you go through the publishing process.

Most self-published work is crap. A large portion of traditionally published work is crap too, but at least it's got a shot at selling. If you want to rise to the top you will need original content packaged uniquely and marketed effectively, even then you'll still need to rely on a large dollop of luck.

Clearly you've leveraged your passion (#3) and told a story (#4) or you wouldn't have a manuscript in the first place, so we'll ignore those commandments. Commenting on other speakers isn't wholly applicable to publishing<sup>4</sup>. That sets the first five commandments aside, leading us to number six: "Thou shalt not flaunt thine ego." You have something to say, hopefully something externally-oriented, but don't think that that you know everything. Even the best writers in the world use writers' roundtables, professional peer reviews, editors, and agents to vet their work. Don't be afraid of feedback (though do choose wisely who you get it from).

Okay, we've spent a couple thousand words in the section about having an injunction without actually stating what that means. That's because we needed to set the stage, of course, but now we'll cut to the chase. An injunction is a very simple thing that says, "If you do that, then this will happen."

Think of in terms of how injunctions are used in the legal system. A judge may issue a restraining order. This order might read, "You are to have no contact with the plaintiff and must remain 500 feet away from their person and their residence for the next 360 days." The judge will then add, "If you violate this restraining order, you will be arrested." Pretty straightforward, right? If you follow the injunction then nothing will happen. On the other hand if you do not follow the rules of the restraining order you'll earn a fancy stainless steel bracelet along with an all-expense paid trip to an isolated location with antisocial roommates where you'll be locked away for a very long time.

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<sup>3</sup>While you won't have access to other author's book sale statistics without purchasing a subscription service, you can make an approximation by reviewing Amazon rankings or reviewing similar on-line sources.

<sup>4</sup>Though getting others to comment on you in the form of blurbs/testimonials is a paramount part of marketing your finished product, a reason why top Amazon reviewers get spammed constantly by aspiring writers.

Having an injunction in your writing brings the reader into a decision tree, a path. This path tells a story. Now the story may be academic, it may be clinical, but the injunction makes for engaging writing, and engrossing stories. The entire *Die Hard* movie series is based on a simple injunction. If the hero John McLean (played by actor Bruce Willis) is not successful in his endeavor, horrible things will happen. It's that simple, and that successful.

Clearly a martial arts book is not based on fiction, yet there are stories to be told that illustrate your points. Dry, academic writing is a loser. Vibrant storytelling, on the other hand, takes things to another level which is, of course, why you'll find that in virtually everything we've written. Show forth wondrous things, sharing something that's never been shared before.

Focus on the pertinent not the ancillary. Sometimes, in an attempt to get to "wondrous things" we lose focus. In the martial arts this is commonly referred to as the "esoteric aspects of the art." But we aren't sure that anybody who uses that term really understands what they mean by that phrase. We are confident everyone understands the word "esoteric," yet in the context of martial arts it has become a catch-all for everything that may not initially fit a known methodology or takes extra effort that a reader may not be inclined to put forth. Or the author might simply be misguided or just plain nuts... Any time you begin to touch on what would be considered the ancillary, even though it may be important to you or critical to some aspect of your art, you owe the reader a deep and profound explanation. Anything else will turn them off.

As crass as it may sound, if we go see the rock band KISS and they don't play *Rock n' Roll All Night Long and Party Every Day* we're going to be pissed. We'll feel slighted. Why, because it's their iconic song. In an interview Gene Simmons, founding member and bassist for the group, was asked if he ever gets tired of playing that song. He didn't say "yes," and he didn't say "no." What he said was, "If our fans want us to play *Rock n' Roll All Night Long and Party Every Day* seven times in one show we'll do it." What Gene Simmons was really saying was that "being true to the music" is secondary; "being true to the fans" is paramount. After all, they're the ones who buy his records and attend his shows.

If you've ever been to a KISS concert you know that they close the show with that song. Everybody wants to hear it and they consistently give people what they want, but they do it in a way that provides more than what is expected. More pyrotechnics, more confetti, more effort, more of everything... We've all heard the song before, countless times, yet through the actualization of every available sense the band creates an experience that cannot be re-created anywhere. No matter how well made your Blue Ray disc is, no matter how big your flat-screen TV, no matter how expensive your sound system, you simply cannot get the same experience in your living room that you can from the live band. There's no roar of the crowd, no shockwave from exploding flash pots, no heat wave from pyrotechnics rebounding off your skin. The music is the same, but the experience is vastly different.

Although you don't have a stage show that takes 17 hours to set up, you do have the ability to create a unique experience that your readership can only find via your writings. Focusing on the pertinent and giving it new life, a new angle, a new way in which to engage the reader is your path to success. Focus on ancillary without a full and complete addressing that brings the ancillary into the pertinent and you will have missed your mark. So we caution you while being fresh and innovative to simultaneously not dive down a rabbit hole. You will lose your readers, receive poor reviews, and your book will begin the death spiral in the public arena.

## The final word

There are many, many aspects to the writing and sales process and we did not cover them all, but we did cover the ones that we think are key—and not often enough addressed.

As you approach the writing process, we hope you will look at what we have said, take it under consideration, explore, think, and approach the process with your eyes wide open. As your manuscript progresses, we also believe that you need to consider the admonishment that scientists working on the cutting edges of technology continuously pay attention to:

*“Just because we can doesn’t mean we should.”*

Well, should you? Do you have a great idea that folks would be willing to buy? Does it follow the relevant TED Commandments? Have you packaged it with an outstanding title, a fantastic cover, and a meaningful injunction? If so, we believe you’re on the path toward success. Stay the course... And best luck!

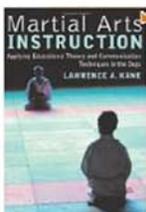
Be safe, and be well.

## Books by Lawrence Kane and Kris Wilder



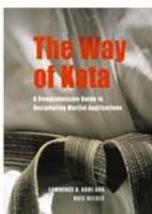
### [How to Win a Fight: A Guide to Avoiding and Surviving Violence](#)

Two veteran martial arts instructors and a renowned comic book illustrator deliver the ultimate course in self-defense. More than three million Americans are involved in a violent physical encounter every year. In these situations, knowledge is power, and few teachers are better equipped to deliver that knowledge than Lawrence Kane and Kris Wilder.



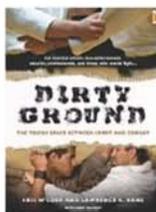
### [Martial Arts Instruction: Applying Educational Theory and Communication Techniques In the Dojo](#)

While the old adage, "those who can't do, teach," is not entirely true, all too often "those who can do" cannot teach effectively. This book is unique in that it offers a holistic approach to teaching martial arts; incorporating elements of educational theory and communication techniques typically overlooked in budo.



### [The Way of Kata: A Comprehensive Guide for Deciphering Martial Applications](#)

The ancient masters developed kata, or "formal exercises," as fault-tolerant methods to preserve their unique, combat-proven fighting systems. Unfortunately, they deployed a two-track system of instruction where an 'outer circle' of students unknowingly received modified forms with critical details or important principles omitted. Only the select 'inner circle' that had gained a master's trust and respect would be taught okuden waza, the powerful hidden applications of kata.



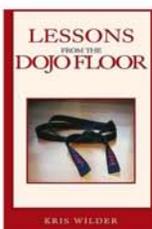
### [Dirty Ground: The Tricky Space Between Sport and Combat](#)

This book was written to address an important gap that exists in martial arts training. The gap is the space or dirty ground that lives between sport and combat techniques; that is when you need to control a person without severely injuring him (or her). Techniques in this space are called 'drunkle', named after your drunken uncle at the family gathering who needs to be escorted away before he hurts somebody or vice versa.



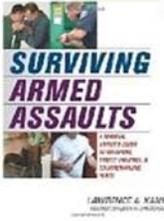
### [The Way to Black Belt: A Comprehensive Guide to Rapid, Rock-Solid Results](#)

Packed with actionable information, you will learn how to set goals, find a good instructor, monitor your progress, overcome plateaus in your training, take advantage of learning opportunities, and work through the inevitable injuries that come with rigorous martial arts training. Putting your skills to the test at each development stage of your training requires a certain mental clarity. The authors examine what this means, how to find it, and how to make sure that when the time comes you are 100 percent prepared.



[Lessons from the Dojo Floor](#) Most books on Martial arts tend to be on technique (which most should learn from their teachers) but Wilder's book is a nice change. Gleaned from what obviously is years of training, he goes beyond the gross lessons of training and gives away some subtleties (of martial arts and life) that many never seem to figure out.

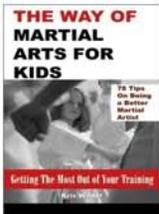
## Books by Lawrence Kane and Kris Wilder



[Surviving Armed Assaults: A Martial Artists Guide to Weapons, Street Violence, and Countervailing Force](#)  
Fair Fight? Not likely. Least of all from a criminal who is looking to make a quick profit at your expense. A sad fact is that weapon-wielding thugs victimize 1,773,000 citizens every year in the United States alone. Even martial artists are not immune from this deadly threat. Consequently, self-defense training that does not consider the very real possibility of an armed attack is dangerously incomplete.



[Scaling Force: Dynamic Decision Making Under Threat of Violence](#) by Rory Miller, Lawrence A. Kane  
Conflict and violence cover a broad range of behaviors, from intimidation to murder, and require an equally broad range of responses. A kind word will not resolve all situations, nor will wristlocks, punches, or even a gun. *Scaling Force* introduces the full range of options, from skillfully doing nothing to employing deadly force. You will understand the limits of each type of force, when specific levels may be appropriate, the circumstances under which you may have to apply them, and the potential costs, legally and personally, of your decision.



[The Way of Martial Arts for Kids](#)

Based on centuries of traditions martial arts is a positive experience for kids. The Way of Martial Arts for Kids helps you and yours get the most out of class.

## Fiction by Lawrence Kane



[Blinded by the Night](#)

Richard Hayes is a Seattle cop. After 25 years with the PD he thinks he knows everything there is to know about predators. The dregs of society like rapists, murderers, gang bangers, and child molesters are just another day at the office. Commonplace criminals become the least of his problems when he goes hunting for a serial killer and runs into a real monster. The creature not only attacks him, but merely gets pissed off when he shoots it. In the head. Twice! Surviving that fight is only the beginning.

## Books by Lawrence Kane and Kris Wilder En Espanol



[VÍA DEL KATA SANCHIN, LA. La aplicación de la energía](#) El kata sanchin forma el núcleo desde el que irradian todos los demás katas. Su práctica lo guiará en el katatal como fue concebido originariamente y descubrirá quees muy diferente de la forma moderna del kárate que hoyse suele practicar. El kata sanchin fracciona losmovimientos según unos principios de progresividad cuyacom prensión resulta imprescindible para dominar el arte de la mano vacía.



[Instrucción en artes marciales / Martial Arts Instruction: Como aplicar la teoria de la ensenanza y las tecnicas de comunicacion en el dojo](#)

## 日本語



[日本の空手家も知らなかった三戦（サンチン）の「なぜ？」—身体構造に基づく姿勢・動作・呼吸・意識で最大のポテンシャルを引き出す！「三戦」の驚異的效果を逆輸入！？アメリカ人空手家](#)が書いた、合理的HOW TO本の日本語版。伝統武術マスターの鍵は三戦型にあり。柔術、剣術、拳法、合気道…e t c. あらゆる武術愛好家にお勧めの1冊。