



Whip Me,
Beat Me,

Make Me
Write Hot Sex!

A writer's guide to BDSM basics...
and for those who are curious.

Tymber Dalton



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Chapter One: Why We're Here

BDSM is one of the hottest selling erotica genres. No surprise, because it's such a rich and diverse topic. For those familiar with the lifestyle, some of the fiction revolving around the BDSM world is, unfortunately, laughably lacking in accuracy.

That's why I've created this primer of sorts for my fellow writers who want to dip their toe into the world of BDSM. To help them avoid common errors you won't catch if you only do your research on Wikipedia. It's impossible for me to cover everything, but if you email me with questions I'll update this primer every so often and include those questions as covered topics.

This primer is also good for people who might have questions about the BDSM lifestyle but don't know where (or who) to begin asking.

Ready?

Let's begin.

First of all, let me tell you who I am and why I'm qualified to write on this topic in the first place. I do not claim to be an expert on all things kinky. No one can claim that, due to the richly diverse ways people go about practicing their kink. I have, however, done my research on the topics I've written about. I am active in the BDSM lifestyle as a switch, meaning I'm comfortable on either end of the whip, so to speak.

Some of you will be familiar with my books such as *The Reluctant Dom*, *Domme by Default*, *Safe Harbor*, and *Love Slave for Two: Beginnings*, where I use BDSM as an integral part of the storyline. Some of my books, like *Fierce Radiance*, *Love Slave for Two*, and *Love Slave for Two: Family Matters* only touch on certain aspects of it in a milder way.

I have done a lot of field research, as it were, on the topic. I have attended BDSM play parties, Munches, talked to people in the lifestyle, and made many friends there. I have had manuscripts vetted by seasoned members of the BDSM community. I have tried my hand at a more than a few things as a top and as a bottom. Trust me, you cannot write about trying to throw a singletail unless you have actually tried to throw a singletail.

The next two things I'm about to share with you will sound very contradictory, but you'll soon see that, in fact, they aren't.

1. *No two players practice BDSM the same way.*

2. *Most writers inaccurately portray BDSM.*

The problem is, like with any diversion, for lack of a better word, there are "one true ways." Or, as you might see it written on FetLife.com, "won true ways". (WTW's) There are people who will insist, no matter how much research you do, no matter how right you get it, that you still got it wrong because you didn't write it *their* way.

Ignore them.

My book *The Reluctant Dom* was ripped apart by one reviewer for, according to them, not being an accurate portrayal of BDSM, because "no one they knew" practiced it like that. Despite the fact that not only did a Dom friend of mine with over twenty years of experience in the lifestyle vet the manuscript for me, he told me that he knew a couple that went through a similar situation as Kaden and Leah in my story. Also, I had a lifestyle slave contact me and tell me that she used to be a cutter and her sister slave used to burn herself, and that their two Masters have a pact that if one dies, the other will assume responsibility for the surviving slave. Another Dom I know locally, who has been active in the lifestyle for over thirty years, read "The Reluctant Dom" and told me I absolutely got it right. Not to mention I personally know people in the lifestyle who use BDSM play as a safe, alternative method of coping with stress or trauma. And those are just a few of many examples.

Now, that leads me to point number two. When I say most writers inaccurately portray BDSM, it's usually because they don't understand the underpinnings of the lifestyle. They don't do adequate research on the tools and techniques, or they treat BDSM as a sex act like anal sex or the missionary position instead of understanding the mindset behind BDSM.

This is a different issue from people practicing the lifestyle in different ways. This means you cannot use handcuffs for suspension work (as I read in one story). You cannot keep someone tied up for hours in certain ways and expect them to not be injured. You cannot have a Dom or Top whaling on someone with a cane without regards to whether or not they're cutting flesh—you can easily break the skin with a cane, or cause internal injuries. A woman who is dominant all her life with no submissive leanings whatsoever is not going to suddenly decide to be a lifestyle slave after a thirty minute play session. Also, keep in mind that just because someone has a kinky relationship doesn't mean they automatically have kinky sex. Or someone might have kinky sex and a totally vanilla relationship.

While yes, you can take literary liberties, there is a huge difference between liberties and lazy writing. Start with some basis in reality so you don't run your story off the rails.

After reading quite a few fiction BDSM books and realizing they all shared one fatal flaw—lack of accurate research—I decided it was time to write a primer to help my fellow writers. Especially when I asked around and found that several of them had never witnessed any BDSM activities first-hand, and that they got their information through second-hand sources.

You cannot get your information about BDSM from reading other fictional BDSM books. Trust me, most of those authors didn't do in-depth research. At least, not the authors of many of the books I've read. Not to mention people in the lifestyle also read erotica, and if you commit fatal errors in your manuscript, you will lose them as a reader.

Another issue is that, frankly, many editors are not versed in BDSM. They can easily miss errors. If you want to accurately write about BDSM and you don't practice it, or you don't want to do real-life research, hook up with someone in the lifestyle (who isn't a "won twue wayer") to read through your manuscript for you and give you a thumbs up or down.

What I'm about to tell you should *not* be taken as the final word on the topic of BDSM. Your mileage and experience, if you have real-world BDSM experience, might vary. This is simply meant to be a guidebook to help you avoid the common pitfalls and errors plaguing much of BDSM fiction written by vanilla writers. (By vanilla, of course, I mean someone who isn't into the lifestyle.)

How can you do your own research? Start with a site like FetLife.com There you can hook up with kinksters in your area, meet with them for a Munch (a vanilla lunch or dinner where everyone gets together to talk) or at the very least make contacts locally you can talk to and ask questions. Don't be afraid to say hey, I'm a writer and I need to do research. I did that, and I was welcomed with open arms. Other writers I've talked to who did that also reported the same thing. Don't lie to them.

Also, as a writer, know that rule one in the lifestyle (after "no means NO") is that you never out someone. Period. (Unless, of course, they do something like murder someone, duh.) So as long as you make it crystal clear to people that you have no intention of exposing anyone, your privacy will also be respected. My local friends in the lifestyle joke that they know anything they say around me can and very well might make it into a book. And yes, some things have. However, I always make sure that when I use a real life instance for a fictional scene, I always change the details and the players so there is no possible way it can be associated with the original participants.

In fact, one of my Dom friends, whenever we see him always pulls me aside and says, "Have I got a story for you!" I love that guy. I've also discovered that a lot of the people I've met in the lifestyle have awesomely, wickedly warped senses of humor in greater concentrations than I usually encounter in the vanilla world.

If you are invited to attend a play party or Munch, go! Ask questions. As is often stated, if people didn't want to be watched at a party, they'd stay home and be kinky in their living room. At one party I was asking a Dom about one of his floggers, and within five minutes I was surrounded by several Doms showing me their floggers and explaining the differences to me. Another Dom friend of mine gave me lessons on throwing a singletail whip (not as easy as you might think it is) and I let him do cupping on me. (I'll explain that in another chapter, it's sort of like a massage, and my shoulder felt sooo good for a week after.)

I learned that many BDSM players frequent tack shops when they don't own horses, because it's cheaper to buy real riding crops (they're frequently a better quality too) than to buy riding crops sold online in fetish shops. I learned why suspension cuffs are almost a requirement when playing like that, and how they differ from regular wrist cuffs (and how those differ from handcuffs). I learned the difference between canes and crops, between stingy and thuddy floggers, and why ceiling fans can be dangerous when you use a singletail! I went to FetCon in Tampa and learned why a \$30 corset can't compare to a \$300 custom-made corset.

These are things I never could have learned from Wikipedia. If you want to write about it, you need to learn about it. Remember, just because a kink doesn't appeal to you, as long as it involves consenting human adults—meaning no kids, no animals, no people unable to give consent— then yeah, it might squick you out, but something that gets you off might squick someone else, so it's best to adopt a "live and let live" policy.

Remember, this is not meant to be an all-encompassing, etched-in-stone explanation of the hows and whys. This is merely an introduction to the topic to help cut through the confusion. Everyone practices BDSM and kink in their own way, and it might totally differ from how another person practices it.

If you're looking to dip your own toe into the pool, keep this in mind: define your relationships *your* way, not the way you think they need to be, and not just because someone else does things that way.

So let's get you up to speed on the basics. Come with me, grasshopper, and let me broaden your kinky mind.

Chapter Two: What is BDSM?

BDSM is an umbrella term that overlaps a wide variety of activities that range anywhere from weekend bedroom games to serious twenty-four/seven lifestyle activities. It is commonly stated that BDSM stands for:

Bondage and Domination (or Discipline)

Domination and submission (capitalization and lack thereof deliberate on my part)

Sadism and masochism

Okay, technically true. But the truth is (refer to rule number one) that there are many people out there who practice only one or two aspects of BDSM. And to make it even more confusing, there are people who are in “taken in hand” relationships, or who practice “domestic discipline,” who totally disassociate themselves from BDSM despite their relationships having certain overlapping aspects of BDSM.

What is a fetish versus a kink? Well, that’s hard to say. A normally vanilla guy might really enjoy looking at blonde women. That might be something that pumps his woody. That could be said to be a fetish. If he follows them on his knees and offers to suck their toes...that might be considered a kink. (Or, it could still be a fetish.) The terms can overlap. What your grandmother might consider kinky might be considered vanilla by other vanilla people.

Part of the confusion comes from personal perception and experiences. Most young girls and boys go through a “they have cooties” period in their life when thinking about the opposite sex. Once they hit puberty, they’re suddenly looking at those formerly cootie-infested people in a whole new light. What I might have considered kinky years ago, I now, because of my research, see as nothing special.

When my husband and I attended our first play party, I basically used him as a human shield as we wandered through the playspace and watched and asked questions. He wasn’t much more comfortable than I was. But now, we can go to a play party to meet up with friends and stand there talking over the buffet table, while only feet away someone is being beaten into an orgasm, and our only reaction is to either joke about it, or raise our voices just a little so we can be heard.

It’s all about your frame of reference.

If you’ve ever trolled the Internet for BDSM videos (in the name of “research,” of course) and come across websites like kink.com or others, and seen leather and Latex-clad Dominatrixes whipping the snot out of cowering guys, don’t assume that’s how everyone does it. Just shut down your browser and step away from the computer.

The truth is, most of the BDSM video content you see for commercial distribution is the equivalent to *Playboy* or *Penthouse* for vanillas—it’s not reality, it’s wank fodder. It’s created to sell.

Most of the people who practice BDSM are not at the extreme end of the scale. Yes, there are edge players, people who enjoy going that far or playing that heavy, but most people are closer to the middle or vanilla end of the kinky scale.

If you’ve ever enjoyed being tied up in bed while your significant other has their way with you, technically, you’re into bondage.

“But I’m not one of...*those* people!”

Oh, really? But you enjoyed being tied up, maybe you even enjoyed it when they used a blindfold on you. Or maybe you enjoyed it when they came home, shoved you down on the bed, and told you they were going to have their way with you.

Hmm, sounds like you might enjoy being submissive, too.

“But I’m *not* submissive! I’m not one of...*those* people!”

Okay, do you see where I’m going with this? *Those* people are doctors, lawyers, moms, dads, teachers, police, military personnel, nurses, government workers, fast-food servers, truck drivers, sons, daughters, husbands, wives... people.

Just. Like. You.

They are no different than you, except they’ve dared to embrace certain aspects of their personality or sexuality. Remember, some people aren’t into BDSM for the sexual aspect of it, they are just into it because they need someone to be in control in their life. Then there are those who are only into it for the sexual kink. And there are people everywhere in between.

Why are people into BDSM, or non-vanilla types of relationship dynamics? I can’t tell you that. The reasons are as varied as the participants.

There’s another common misconception I want to blast out of the water right now. Most people into “public” BDSM usually aren’t having sex in public. Especially in a club where the general public has access. (An example of this would be a fetish night held at a bar where zoning laws governing behavior allowed in an establishment with a liquor license prohibit public nudity and/or sexual activities.)

I see your raised hand, and yes, I know that it’s not uncommon for submissives/bottoms to have orgasms during scenes. That’s not sex.

That’s all right. I’ll wait while you digest that.

Okay, let’s back up so you understand how I can make that statement.

Some people might only enjoy being tied up. Some people might be pain sluts (or pain pigs) and have no desire to

have a Master/Dom. Some people might only like the submission aspect and have absolutely no desire for bondage or pain. Some aren't submissive, but like to bottom. Some people are Tops but they aren't sadists, they're service tops and enjoy topping. And that's not even a complete list of the possibilities.

Some people who are lumped under the BDSM umbrella only enjoy doing things like walking around in fetish gear. That might be a man who puts on high heels and a corset, a straight man who doesn't consider himself a cross-dresser, but he enjoys dressing up like that in certain situations.

The BDSM "umbrella" is often referred to as WIITWD (What It Is That We Do). Some consider this a more inclusive term to basically separate vanilla from kinky. You can be kinky and not be into BDSM.

Remember that old joke that kinky is using a feather and perverted is using the whole chicken?

Again, just because someone is into Dominance and submission doesn't mean they engage in any type of sensory/impact play or bondage. It might just be a relationship dynamic and they have vanilla sex. But they might still consider themselves kinky.

Another myth I want to destroy is that if someone is poly or a swinger, that doesn't automatically make them into BDSM, and vice-versa. I know plenty of people in the BDSM world who are happily monogamous. Yes, there are some who are into all of the above, but don't write your BDSM participants as sex-crazed people who will sleep with everyone, because that's another myth fueled by porno sales.

Not every Dominant is a sadist. Not every submissive is a masochist. And if you slip into stereotypes (I refuse to call them archetypes) you'll end up with as weak a story as if you wrote a vanilla romance with an Alpha hero and TSTL (too stupid to live) heroine who has to be rescued at every turn.

One of the common erroneous storylines I see is the clueless female submissive who stumbles into an experienced Dominant, and he just *knows* she's submissive and has to introduce her to a whole new world. Within minutes she lets him tie her up and spank her, or he's used the plot device of dubious consent/forced seduction, and she's suddenly melting and realizing she's meant to be HIS for life.

Um, no. Not so much.

First of all, most experienced Dominants will not just start playing with a newbie without setting down a lot of ground rules first, without talking, negotiating, and getting to know them at least a little. There are rape and assault laws in real life that must be taken into consideration. And let me tell you what, unless it's an established couple who practice consensual non-consent (we'll talk about that later), if a submissive utters ANYTHING that sounds like a safeword, or "no" or "stop," I guarandamtee you that if the Dominant doesn't stop, they'd have a dungeon full of other people stepping in to end the scene. (No one wants to be listed as an accessory to assault.) There may be private groups where this isn't a rule, but so far at the events I've been to both public and private, it is.

"Aw, come on, it's *fiction*."

Well, yes, that's true. Again, you can write a more true-to-life tale without crossing into what amounts to inaccurate purple prose stereotypes about BDSM.

Don't forget there are plenty of male submissives out there, and I'm not even talking gay ones, I'm talking straight men who want to be submissive to their female partner. Not "sissy men" either, but men who in their normal lives are even seen as Alpha men. (This was the topic of my book *Domme by Default*.) They don't necessarily want the mythical "über Domme" fantasy, they might just want to be their woman's shining knight or faithful servant, not her whipping boy. Why would a woman want a submissive man? What woman wouldn't enjoy a man to take care of them, love them, and put them on a pedestal?

What many writers totally miss is that the trappings of BDSM aren't important, unless of course you get something wrong. The underpinnings of a BDSM relationship, whether it's a committed relationship or just a one-time Top and bottom play scene, all come down to trust. The bottom trusts that the Top won't hurt them in a bad way. The Top trusts that the bottom won't go running to the police the next morning claiming assault. The bottom and Top must trust each other in a way that's equivalent to the activities they are participating in.

Obviously, for relationships where the people are involved as more than just play partners, there is a different level of trust.

There are, believe it or not, people who voluntarily live as lifestyle slaves. In their real life they might be in a dominant position professionally—but not always, that's another stereotype. But when they go home, they may be a slave to their partner. They might or might not enjoy bondage and pain/impact play. Just because they're a slave doesn't mean they don't have negotiated limits. There are some slaves who consider themselves "no limit" slaves, but that's usually because they trust their Master/Mistress and know that no harm will be allowed to come to them.

If you troll FetLife.com you'll see this is a common flame war-instigating topic. There are "won twue wayers" who insist you cannot be a "true" slave unless you have no limits and submit totally to your Master. Then there are people who consider themselves slaves who tell those people they're full of shit. (I tend to side with the latter, not the WTW's.) There are people who consider themselves practitioners of "internal enslavement" where it's a mental state as well as physical practice.

Unfortunately, there are a lot of "wannabee" Doms (usually men but sometimes women, too) who use BDSM as an

excuse to be abusive. Those are pretty easy to spot, because they're so full of shit that they squeak when they walk, to use an old expression. They are active online, but when faced with real life, they either disappear or they end up going through subs like crazy because no one wants to stay with them. They are narcissists and abusive jerks who think that any women (or men) who claim to be a submissive should immediately bow before them and suck up to them (or suck something). Because they are a DOM!

Um, yeah, riiiiight. How's that God complex working for you, Sparky?

You will sometimes run into Dominants (male and female) who rudely demand every person address them with an honorific Sir, Ma'am, Mistress, Master, High Potentate, whatever. (Many people see those kinds of Dominants as FOS— Full of Shit.) There are some Dominants who appreciate being shown that respect, but don't demand it. The best thing to do is ask the individual how they prefer to be addressed. (This is, of course, not much different than vanilla life.) A majority of the people I've run into, if you're not their sub, they're fine with you just calling them by their name, or if a sub insists on using an honorific (some subs prefer to always use an honorific) Ma'am or Sir.

Unless...it's a leather club or other group where those kinds of high protocols are expected. Usually in those cases that's just the way they do things, and if you ask them what their protocols are, they'll tell you. See, there are differences, from groups who are a loose gathering of friends, to formal organizations who have bylaws and rules and all sorts of expectations, and everything in between.

When I first hooked up with a local group of kinksters, their unofficial leader, a Dom in the lifestyle for several decades with a slave wife, told me to look at it like being Jewish. There are people who are totally kosher, who strictly abide by all the religious rules and are very orthodox. Then, there are the moderates and reformed, and down the line to those just there for the food. "Most people are here for the food," he said as he laughed. Meaning that while there is a broad spectrum of ways to practice BDSM, again, no two people practice their kink the same way or with the same level of dedication or strictness.

Disclosure: Most of my personal experience has been with groups on the looser, less formal end of the scale, although I have had interaction with people who practice high protocol. In my experience, however, the high-protocol people didn't require others not in their high-protocol groups to use the same protocols and honorifics. Again, *your* mileage may vary, especially if you live in a different area of the country. One thing that is universal, you should offer everyone you meet in the lifestyle common courtesy regardless of their role in it. If in doubt, just ask the person and be up front that you want to make sure you get it right. They'll be happy to tell you what they prefer, and they'll appreciate the courtesy.

In my experience, the average Dominant doesn't try to boss around subs that don't belong to them. Unless, of course, there is some prearranged agreement allowing that to happen. In fact, many play parties and clubs have rules that you keep your hands off other people's toys and subs. The average Dominant and submissive is there to have a good time with their friends, and with their partner if they have one, or with a play partner if they hook up, and they're just... average people. Dominants who do try to engage in that kind of overbearing behavior soon find themselves uninvited to group functions, as will submissives who try to latch onto other Dominants.

The average submissive (or slave) doesn't scurry around to serve everyone, although there are some subs who have that kink. (More power to them.) The average submissive is in attendance with their partner, Dominant, Top (whatever term they use) and plays with them. If they're single or attending alone, they might have arranged to play with someone there. They might also play with people they know well, especially if there is a Dominant who is a service-top who enjoys playing with others. Some subs will attend functions under the protection or mentorship of a Dominant they don't belong to so they feel more comfortable going without a partner of their own.

Or, and I know this might shock some of you, they might just go to the play party to hang out with their friends and not play at all. (*Gasp!*)

I'm sure there will be people in the lifestyle who say, "Um, that's not how things are done where I am," and that's fine. In different areas of the country, there are different groups with different general "rules." There are also differences depending on if a group is a general mixed BDSM group, or if they might be a gay Leatherman group, or a pony play group, or a spanking group, or whatever. There are different rules for groups who play in private homes, or private membership-only clubs where full sexual contact might be allowed, versus rules for public club venues where indecency and public nudity laws must be adhered to.

So what is an "average" BDSM relationship?

Well, that's impossible to say. Commonly, there is usually a Dominant partner and a submissive partner, but not always. The partners might "switch," meaning they take turns. Or one might be Dominant, but they might also be a masochist and they have their submissive top them (notice I didn't capitalize that because it's a verb) in a scene.

Again, WTW's will try to claim any Dominant who is a switch isn't a "real" Dominant. And again, those people are FOS.

Or there might be people who only practice this type of dynamic in the bedroom or at a play party, and in the rest of their relationship they are vanilla.

Let's talk terminology. While on sites like FetLife.com you'll see some submissives using slashy speak, a lot of

people don't bother with that in real life. Slashy speak is an extremely formal way of writing where you see a submissive pen something like this: "W/we are looking forward to coming to Your party, Sir. Master has told this girl that she will be allowed to play..."

Or you'll see a submissive referring to themselves in all lower-case (not uncommon): "i am looking forward to coming to Your party. Master has said that i..."

But again, not all Dominants require that.

* * * *

Terminology.

Let me state up front before I start this section that I am in no way trying to denigrate any demographic, gay or straight or flexible. I am not trying to leave anyone out, but at some point, for the sake of readability, I cannot include every single possible combination.

When you're researching GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered) BDSM topics, you might see terms like boi, gurl, gyrl, Syr, or other terms spelled unusually. How people chose to be addressed or labeled is solely up to them, and I am in no way trying to exclude any group of people.

I tend to write about m/f and m/m pairings (or ménage versions of those) and not f/f pairings. So this primer is written from that point of view. If you write f/f stories, I'm in no way trying to exclude you.

Pet Peeve: There is no such thing as a *Dominate*. The word dominate is a verb. A *Dominant* can dominate someone. You can be dominated. You might have a dominant personality, or you might be a Dominant. You cannot be a "Dominate." So, please, check your spellings!

Dominants: A male is a Dom, a female is a Domme, sometimes a Dominatrix or Domina. Unless they want to consider themselves a Dom. Some people pronounce "Domme" as "Dom-may," but a lot of people just say it "Dom." When referring to a Dom/me, you will almost always capitalize it if referring to a specific person or relationship position. (Exception, if using it as a descriptor, it's written lower-case: He has a dominant personality. He is a Dominant. She is his Dominant.)

There is no hard and fast rule, when referring to a female Dominant, to the title they will use. It is not uncommon for a pro-Domme to refer to herself as a Dominatrix, but I've seen non-pro Dommies also call themselves a Dominatrix, so again, that's very flexible.

And as one female Domme once wrote, "Just because I'm a Domme doesn't make me *your* Domme."

Unfortunately, it's not uncommon for female Dominants to be harassed by male submissives who are looking to have their submissive fantasies fulfilled. These types of subs are frequently called "do-me" subs, and they can also be female subs going after male Dominants. It's also not uncommon for female submissives to be harassed by male "Dominants" (quotes intentional) who are abusive assholes looking for a quickie.

Master/Mistress: These are commonly used titles. Again, capitalize when referring to the Dominant. Not all Doms are Masters, not all Masters are Doms. (I know, it's confusing.) Some Dominants consider themselves Masters/Mistresses, some do not. It's a personal thing, there is no official test you take to get the ranking. Some use collars, some do not. Some have formal contracts, some do not. No two relationships are alike. Some people are married to their slaves, some are not. Some have more than one slave/sub.

Oh, and let's add this in now for even more confusion. Just because someone is a slave or submissive to someone else, that does not automatically mean they have sex with that person. There are slaves/subs who only engage in service to someone. In fact it's not uncommon for Dominants to play or scene in a non-sexual way with submissives or slaves they aren't partnered with, while that submissive or slave might be married to someone else. This is especially true if the other Dominant has skills the submissive or slave wants to experience. Many Dominants don't work with singletails, so if a submissive wants to experience that, they (along with their Dominant, of course) might ask to play with a Dominant who does. And a submissive might be married or partnered with a vanilla person who isn't into the lifestyle, but who allows their partner to get those kinky needs met in a non-sexual way.

MaleDom (or Maledom) refers to the male being the Dominant partner. *FemDom* (Femdom) refers to the female being the Dominant partner.

Writing style guide for BDSM: When using He/She capitalized in a story, be careful how you handle that. You might find yourself in a trap of capitalizing every instance of that word in application toward a Dominant. You don't need to do that, and it can lead to accidental inconsistencies if you miss some. Save the capitalization for direct references in internal monologue or spoken dialogue, and only when writing from the submissive's point of view. The Dominant wouldn't speak about themselves like that, unless they're a total dork. For capitalizing Dom/me, Master, Mistress, etc. they should almost always be capitalized in a story, unless it's used as verb or descriptor and not a title/label. Even then, depending on the story and application, that can be flexible. (And remember, dominate is a verb, not a noun or a title.) However you do it, do it consistently. Submissive, slave, bottom, and other uses are always lower-cased unless the first word in a sentence.

submissives/slaves: When referring to a submissive or slave, use lower-case (unless at the beginning of a sentence).

Dominant/submissive. Master/slave. Not all submissives are slaves, not all slaves are submissives. Some Dominants have a slave, some Masters have a submissive. I know one woman who loves to top others, and she's definitely not submissive, but she is her husband's slave. She only submits to him in that way, and he even says she's not submissive. I know the WTW's will have an aneurism when they read that, but it's the truth.

Owners/property (pet, toy, whatever): Some people refer to themselves as an Owner and a pet. Or an Owner and a toy. Or some sort of variation of that. Again, there is no set standard, and people define their own relationships. Sometimes people affiliate with more than one designation.

Top/bottom: This is one of the most flexible sets of terms. Top and bottom can mean anything from the sexual position taken in an encounter or relationship, to people playing in a scene regardless of their other dominance-related orientations. Someone can be submissive and still be a Top, someone can bottom and be Dominant. Some people only play without the D/s dynamic involved elsewhere in their relationship, so Top and bottom fit them better. You can be a Top and top (or Top) someone. The key in this is consistency in how you use the term. You don't have to always capitalize Top like you do Dominant or Master, but you can. Usually, if used as a verb, it's not capitalized. If used as a noun, and in reference to a Dominant, it's capitalized. If used as a noun in reference to a submissive, it's not capitalized.

Switch: A switch is someone that doesn't mind taking on either role. This might be only in certain circumstances, like with one partner, or it might be for certain activities, like if they enjoy receiving needle play but they normally are Dominant. Once again, this is another hot-button topic for the WTW's who insist a "true" Dominant never bottoms or switches. (Remember, WTW equals FOS.)

Topping from the bottom refers to a submissive who tries to control the play or get their way. This is similar to a *smart-assed masochist* (SAM) who tries to gig their Dominant into a reaction (like punishing them). A *brat* is usually a submissive who is just that—bratty. This can range from amusing to annoying behavior, depending on how it happens. Some Dominants tolerate or even permit this (so they can punish the sub), and some see it as a violation of their protocols and will release a sub who engages in it.

The types of relationships can vary widely from people who only play in private behind their bedroom doors to people who live the lifestyle openly twenty-four/seven. Relationships can vary from playful bedroom fun to a serious Master and slave relationship.

There is an old joke that states a true masochist says, "Beat me!" and a true sadist says, "No." Actually, that's true, in many ways. Dominants/Tops/sadists have as many ways of practicing their kink as submissives/slaves/bottoms/masochists have of receiving it. I joke about one of my friends that he's the sweetest sadist you'll ever meet. There are sadists who are bottoms, there are masochists who are Tops. There are people who switch in that way as well, they both enjoy giving and receiving.

There are sensual sadists, where if you watch them play, what they're doing looks more like heavy-duty foreplay than sadomasochism. There are sadists who edge play, doing things you wouldn't think any human being could take. And people everywhere in between. Believe me, there are masochists to fill the spectrum as well.

There are service tops who aren't sadists, but their kink is getting a submissive or masochist into subspace so they'll play as lightly or heavily with them as they need to. There are submissives who are obedience-driven, so even though they might not enjoy pain play, they'll take it because obedience is their kink and by taking the pain, it puts them into subspace.

Let's talk about subspace. I once heard a WTW say that it's impossible to put someone into subspace without beating them there.

Hmm. I'd hate to be that person's submissive. I've personally witnessed submissives talked into subspace by their Dominants. Especially Dominants who've been practicing for a while and who have a background in hypnosis and NLP and have set "triggers" for their subs. I've talked to even more submissives who say absolutely, a Dominant they trust can easily slide them into subspace without laying a hand on them. Sometimes the build up to a scene, the anticipation of what will happen, rituals and routines the Dominant uses, can have the submissive (or sub) in subspace before they even take the first stroke with an implement.

What is subspace?

Subspace is a mental state, frequently fueled by endorphins released during a scene (sort of like the purported "runner's high") where the submissive is in a state of mind like a natural high. How a submissive gets into subspace varies from person to person. I've seen male service subs in subspace just from being ordered around. It might not be as deep a subspace as someone getting whipped by a singletail, but it's just as valid a mindset.

In a scene, the general goal usually is for the Dominant to get the submissive into subspace. This doesn't always happen. There is also *Domspace*, where sometimes a Dominant can get so caught up in the scene that they end up in a type of headspace.

Sub-drop is when, for whatever reason, a sub crashes during or even after a scene. It can be something triggering a bad emotion or reaction, it can be if the scene is interrupted and they aren't stepped down from subspace by the Dominant, it can be for any reason. How people experience sub-drop varies from person to person. And yes, *Dom-drop* can happen when a Dominant crashes in a similar manner, emotionally or sometimes even physically. Sometimes a Dom

just needs time to recharge their own emotional batteries.

Contrary to popular belief, Doms are not robots. They don't all gleefully whip their submissive and get off on it. There are as many reasons for a person to be a Dominant as there are for a person to be a submissive. And depending on the type of relationship, the Dominant might be as emotionally drained by the scene as the submissive. It's a huge responsibility to take charge of someone's physical safety and emotional well-being. Yes, there are people who like pain and just want to have the crap beaten out of them, and there are Dominants who will gleefully do that. But again, that's just one aspect, not an all-encompassing truth.

Chastity, forced orgasms, orgasm denial. These are closely linked in that the dominant partner (male chastity is commonly enforced in Femdom relationships, sometimes at the man's request) controls the submissive partner's orgasms or lack thereof. Yes, it is possible to engage in forced orgasm play with a man, but usually he's been denied orgasms for a while leading up to that point so it makes it easier for him to have multiple orgasms. I've talked to Dominants who have established such a deep relationship with their sub that they can order them to climax on command. Usually with an established trigger, so it's totally doable. No, not everyone can do this. Not all Dominants possess the knowledge to train their submissive to do it, and even if they do, not all submissives are able to reach that type of mental state to be able to let go and do it. So yes, it does exist, and I know several female submissives who are able to do it. But no, it's not something everyone can do, especially if they've just met their play partner.

Again, let me emphasize there are plenty of people who play in public whose play never enters a sexual range.

Back to the relationships. You'll see references to FLR or WLR types of relationships. This stands for *Female-Led Relationship* (or *Wife-Led Relationship*). This is where the man wants his wife to take over. In modern parlance, the guy is frequently seen as being pussy-whipped or hen-pecked, but there are men who simply want their wife to be in charge. But that might be as far as their relationship goes. They might not be into BDSM at all.

A *total power exchange* (TPE) relationship can be straight, gay, and involve all or none of the aspects of BDSM. This means the one partner has ceded all control to the other partner. Many Master/slave relationships are TPE.

A *1950's Household* or *Taken In Hand relationship* is one where the woman wants the man to basically take a traditionally dominant role. To be in charge. Unfortunately, women who willingly want this kind of relationship are frequently as ridiculed by their peers as men who want a WLR/FLR relationship. Again, there might be no elements of BDSM in this type of dynamic at all. This shares a close affinity to the traditional Alpha hero who comes in, demands the heroine do what he says, and she swoons and says, "Sure!"

Either of these situations might have an element of *domestic discipline* (DD) to them, where spanking is used as punishment for breaking rules of the relationship, but not as pleasure. (Although that's not to say the recipient of the spanking might not enjoy it!) There are also relationships that aren't FLR or 1950's that use DD as an element of their dynamic.

Cuckolding is another type of relationship where the male (frequently willingly) sits back while the female goes out and sleeps with others. Sometimes bringing them home. Sometimes forcing the cuck (the man the woman sleeps with is referred to as the bull) to prepare the woman to be fucked by the bull. Sometimes he's even required to fluff the bull or help out in some other way during sex. This usually differs from an open relationship in that there is an element of humiliation involved. Yes, there are guys out there who get off on being humiliated like that. Again, don't diss the kink even if it's not yours.

Poly (polyamory/polyamorous), swinging, and open relationships are tricky to define because they are usually defined by the people within those relationships. They might or might not include elements of BDSM. They can also overlap definitions.

The following definitions should be used as a general guide, not as hard and fast rules.

Poly: People who are poly generally have an above-board multiple relationship situation. The most commonly portrayed poly relationships in fiction often involve two men and a woman. If the men are involved with each other as well as the woman, it's labeled mmf, or if the men only do the woman and not each other, it's labeled mfm. This kind of relationship is generally referred to as a triad. However, in real life, it appears there are more fmf and ffm types of triads than mfm and mmf. (Again, this is not a hard and fast rule, it's just what I've learned in my research.)

In poly, there are generally rules to follow, established by those in the relationship, about how (or if) new partners are added to the relationship. A poly relationship might be temporary, or it might be long-term, monogamous, and closed to expansion. If partners are allowed to sleep with others outside of the relationship, there are generally established guidelines dictating things like safe sex and requiring current medical reports on the new partners. Partners in the core relationship (whether a triad or quad or whatever) might have an agreement that they are the only ones allowed to exchange body fluids, but sexual contact outside of the core group must be safe sex.

An *open relationship* is commonly one where the people in the primary relationship see others under pre-stated conditions (usually requiring safe sex) that don't undermine the primary relationship, and the other relationships are usually short-term. (Again, poly and open can overlap.)

Swingers are usually defined as people who swap partners, or who add partners to their relationship, on a temporary basis, sometimes at a party arranged for that purpose. They might or might not regularly swap partners with

the same people.

Unfortunately, a lot of people who simply want to cheat label themselves poly when the truth is, a true poly relationship (and this is about the only rule everyone usually agrees on) has a set of rules dictating that there must be honesty and a consensus amongst the participants.

So if someone says, “I’m poly, but don’t tell my wife,” they’re actually cheating. They might be poly, but the way they’re going about it in that case isn’t in the spirit of poly.

Leathermen are frequently gay men, but not always. There are several versions of the history of Leathermen. I honestly have no idea what the true origins are. There are people who say they are in leather families who adhere to certain high protocols, and it’s a subset of BDSM. If you want to write about the leather culture, I strongly suggest you do a lot of research about it. Don’t toss the term around and refer to a guy wearing leather as a Leatherman.

There are spanking clubs, where people aren’t into BDSM per se, they just like being spanked. No, seriously, I’m not making that up.

There are tea societies, where the women have tea and their men serve them.

There are pony and dog clubs (no, *not* involving animals) where *people* dress up as ponies and dogs (and other animals) and they engage in pony play (or puppy/kitten play). The people enjoy prancing around dressed in pony gear, sometimes down to fake hooves on their hands and feet (or puppy gear, including ears and tails) and their partner (if they have one) is their owner. While there can be a sexual aspect to this, usually in public there isn’t.

Remember, pony and puppy play is NOT bestiality! NO REAL ANIMALS are involved in the play. It’s simply people dressing up as animals and acting out their fantasies. This is closely related to cosplay, where people enjoy dressing up in costumes, usually as some sort of animal (think sports mascot, but not always) and having fun.

There are also Daddy/girl (or boy) relationships which, again, do NOT involve “children.” It’s consenting adults who want to engage either in age play (where they pretend they’re a younger age from babies all the way up to teenager) or who want a Daddy (or Mommy) to take care of them. People who don’t understand this dynamic frequently assume it has something to do with pedophilia, and nothing could be farther from the truth. It is simply a partner wanting the safety and security of a parental or disciplinarian relationship dynamic, maybe it’s one they didn’t have growing up, whatever, and they act it out like that. Or sometimes the Dominant partner is just called Daddy or Mommy without age play involved.

Consensual Non-Consent (CNC), sometimes also called “rape play,” is another legitimate kink. It is what it sounds like, the players have agreed ahead of time to engage in this play. If it’s done in public, the players will let whoever is in charge of the playspace/dungeon know that’s what they’re doing so no one steps in. This kind of play can be hard to witness for people who aren’t familiar with it, because on the surface, it does look like...well, assault or rape, depending on how far they go. If you witness this kind of play and everyone’s standing around and you don’t know if it’s CNC, find a dungeon master or staff member and bring it to their attention. Either they’ll tell you yes, they know, it’s a pre-arranged CNC scene, or they’ll step in and make sure it is in fact a negotiated CNC scene.

Gor/Gorean. This is a common, albeit minority, type of Master/slave dynamic based upon the fictional works of John Norman, and is very high protocol.

There are so many things I could write about that I could, literally, fill a book about it. One thing you *must* keep in mind: people who practice a non-vanilla relationship are *not* inherently weird, broken, sick, twisted, abused, or any other label frequently assigned to them. Yes, some people might have a background of abuse, but many don’t. Many simply get off on the kink.

Some could make the valid argument that many traditional fundamental religious marriages where the wife defers to the husband are technically taken in hand relationships. But I’d also be willing to bet those couples would strongly object to that comparison and distance themselves far from the WIITWD umbrella.

While you will see a lot written of scenes, especially if set in a club, that’s not always how people play. Lifestyle players who live it twenty-four/seven might have set protocols that the submissive goes through every day. I personally know one Mistress who has her slave husband bring her coffee in bed every morning. I’ve read on several other blogs about other Mistresses who also have this as part of their daily ritual. It can be anything formal or innocuous.

Above all, you will see SSC or RACK referred to in BDSM. These stand for *Safe, Sane, and Consensual*, or *Risk-Aware Consensual Kink*. Notice the two phrases share the word *consensual*. In your book, if you’re trying to accurately portray BDSM, *never* have a hero (or heroine) drug their partner to have their way with them. That is predatory and illegal. If you want to have a villain do that, fine, but try to make them not a traditional BDSM player because that plays into a commonly used negative stereotype.

However, some people who have been together for a while don’t play with safewords. Not because they want to engage in dangerous behavior, but because they know their partner so well that either the sub can say, “Um, problem,” and the Dominant will stop the scene or make an adjustment, or the Dominant knows the sub so well that they can sense a problem when it happens and stop or adjust as need be.

Safewords (or not using them) are controversial. The truth of the matter is, no safeword can protect you, that goes back to trust in your partner and their level of experience and skill. A lot of people I know simply use green, yellow, and

red as safewords, rather than trying to remember a safeword. And honestly, some subs and Doms will tell you that when a sub is deeply in subspace, even if there is a problem, they might not be in the right frame of mind to signal their distress. That's why it's vitally important for a top to be experienced, especially if playing with a new partner. Some tops will have their sub hold an item, and if they drop the item the scene is immediately stopped. (Especially if they use a gag on the sub.)

Edge play is when people practice things that are on the far end of the scale, even by kinky standards. These can include things like blood play, knife and needle play, gun play, breath play, fire play, and electro play. Although with some of these activities there are ways to play them, in the hands of a skilled practitioner, that leads to little true risk to the bottom.

Note: I will not cover this further, but it needs a mention. Golden showers and watersports (peeing on someone, being peed on, or consuming urine), scat play (playing with poo), and other similar kinks are, yes, seen in the kinky world in real life. HOWEVER, most publishers will not accept a manuscript with these elements. It tends to squick mainstream readers out and usually is not well-received by vanilla erotica readers.

I have seen stories where a non-human character (Morgan Hawke's *Interstellar Service and Discipline* series comes to mind, involving a feline-like non-human hero) engages in marking behavior using urine. If you include this kind of scene with shape-shifters or other non-human characters, be *very* careful how you write it. If it's possible, I suggest avoiding that altogether to appeal to the largest readership possible. If you insist on using it, be prepared to face objections or rejections from editors who won't accept any manuscripts with those kinds of scenes.

Now as we move on to the next section, I want to repeat that there is no set standard. How one person might practice their kink will differ drastically from how another person practices it.

Chapter Three: Tools of the Trade

There is no possible way to include every single item used in BDSM in one book. It's not possible because as someone once joked, if you can't pervert it, you're just not kinky enough. One popular thread on a discussion board I frequent lists shopping cart combinations that might raise eyebrows with the checkout clerk.

For example: a frozen turkey, a ball of twine, three boxes of condoms, and a jumbo tube of K-Y Jelly. Or ping-pong paddles, duct tape, and candles.

See? Those could be totally innocent, but you know you want to think about it a while, don't you?

Many Dominants frequently call home improvement stores "Dom Depot" because they do more kinky shopping there than they do regular shopping.

I know one Dominant who bought a clear blue plastic round artwork tube case, normally used for carrying around things like blueprints, to carry their crops and canes in.

Another Dominant whose sub is into mummification buys large rolls of clear plastic food wrap from a local discount membership warehouse.

And did you know there are many colors of duct tape available?

I've seen small metal baseball bats, ping-pong paddles, and golf balls used as pervertibles. Clothes pins are another commonly used item. One Dominant used a barbecue skewer for sensory play. And how many people got spanked with a belt or hairbrush?

Let's go over the basics, but remember, this doesn't excuse you from doing your own research, it's meant to help eliminate some confusion so you can easily figure out what you need to learn.

* * * *

Furniture.

Bondage furniture can range from your bed, to a high-dollar, specially made bondage bench and anything in between. If you can figure out a way to tie someone to it, it's bondage furniture. People on low budgets frequently convert yard-sale exercise equipment, like old weight benches, into DIY bondage furniture.

Commonly seen items in a dungeon include a St. Andrew's Cross, which is (usually) an upright X-shaped structure with bondage attachment points at the top, bottom, and sometimes at the waist, too; spanking bench, sometimes called a spanking horse depending on the style; bondage bench; trapeze bar or other suspension rigging; cages; sex slings. Sometimes items might not have a name, or they might be designed to be multi-purpose.

Search for the term *bondage furniture* in your search engine of choice to find out more.

* * * *

Bondage items.

Collars come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, from vanilla day collars worn by people to signify their status to their Dominant partner (sometimes a ring, necklace, bracelet or earring), all the way to formal posture collars that force the wearer's chin up. Collars come in locking and non-locking versions. Some people wear chain collars that resemble dog collars. Collars can be functional or just for looks or both. Ditto leashes.

A note on collaring: Some people view giving or wearing a collar akin to giving or wearing a wedding ring. In fact, it might mean more to them than a wedding ring. Some people wear collars as a fashion statement. Some Dominants use training collars to signify something meaningful to them, some don't. There is no set standard. It is not uncommon for couples in a twenty-four/seven Master/slave relationship to have some sort of day collar and a formal collar, depending on the situation.

Leather wrist cuffs, sometimes padded, sometimes not, are frequently used for bondage. They come with normal buckles or you can order them with buckles made to use with padlocks, like luggage locks. They are usually plain leather or PVC or padded, can be simple or intricate. I've seen metal wrist cuffs, like you've seen in old movies where the hero is in a dungeon or jail cell, but those are not comfortable for practical use long-term and are best left for fashion statements.

For long-term upright or suspension bondage, specially made suspension cuffs are used. Especially if the top anticipates the bottom will be pulling a lot on the cuffs, or will have to support a lot of their weight with their arms. These cuffs include additional support for the wrist, usually including a type of bar or handle inside the cuff that the person wearing them can hold on to. Suspension doesn't have to mean the person's feet are off the ground, but it can mean that.

Handcuffs are *never* used for suspension work. Never. Never. NEVER. Handcuffs are good for restraining someone in a situation where they won't be pulling or yanking on them, like a little bedroom fun and games that don't last long. Even fur-lined handcuffs can injure. Otherwise, the metal will seriously bruise and chafe the wrists. For suspension, they would break someone's wrists if they were pulled off their feet.

If someone is a regular player, they most likely have a set of basic leather wrist cuffs, at the very least. They are

much more comfortable for longer scenes, and you can usually get them starting around \$30 or so for a basic pair.

It's not uncommon for people to use ankle cuffs as well as wrist cuffs.

Harnesses in every possible configuration are also used by some players, sometimes as fetish attire, sometimes as restraint gear.

Arm binders are either harnesses or "bags" that capture the arms and hold them behind the person.

Straightjackets are sometimes used, both medical type and fetish-gear non-medical ones.

Chastity devices differ for men and women, but they range from belts and harnesses to plastic and metal devices that lock over the male genitals. There are also locking harnesses (for men and women) that include holders for dildoes and/or butt plugs, and for men built-in cock rings.

Speaking of cock rings, if you have a male character using a silicone cock ring, make sure he's shaved or at least trimmed. Otherwise, in real life, he'd be trying to cut the thing off later after it got tangled in his pubic hair. (Ow!)

Nipple clamps come in a variety of shapes and styles. Men and women wear them. There are also clit clamps (obviously for women) and there are devices of various shapes and sizes for capturing the cock and balls. Cock and ball torture (CBT) is common in BDSM.

Leash clips, especially double-ended ones, are commonly used for bondage. Panic snaps, like what are used for horse tack, are frequently used for weight-bearing situations, because they'll still release under pressure. Carbiners used for mountain climbing and rappelling are frequently seen in use with rope suspension and bondage.

There are different kinds of rope bondage, usually called shibari (also called kinbaku, although some argue there are distinct differences in the styles of traditional Japanese rope bondage) which are artistic as well as functional, to just plain bondage used to hog tie someone.

SAFETY NOTE: Someone restrained in bondage is NEVER left alone. Especially if they are suspended. People who do rope work frequently carry paramedic scissors or a Leatherman tool on them so they can quickly cut away rope if there is an emergency. Rope used for bondage is not your garden-variety rope you can pick up cheaply at the hardware store. It must be smooth and run little risk of abrading the skin. Do. Your. Research.

SAFETY NOTE 2: Neck ties, normal rope, silk scarves and other items are not usually used for serious bondage. They can chafe, burn, and cut into skin. If you're writing a serious bondage scene, do your research and don't just have the person tied up with neckties (unless they're not struggling and it's just a short game).

SAFETY NOTE 3: If you are not trained in suspension work, NEVER attempt it! Besides the obvious safety risks of accidentally choking someone or dropping them on their head, you can do serious nerve damage if you suspend someone improperly.

* * * *

Impact play.

Impact play usually refers to activities involving...impact. Getting hit. Whether it's a whip, crop, cane, or bare hand, whatever.

Whips come in various flavors, from buggy whips to signal whips, bullwhips, and more. Singletail usually refers to a single-tailed whip. There are different styles of singletails, different qualities and material and lengths. A whip too long is difficult to throw accurately, and can easily snag in a ceiling fan or hit a bystander who's too close. Some whips have falls and poppers, the material, along with how it's handled, can determine if it can cut skin or not.

Dominants who use them (Dominants who are safety minded, that is) never use them on a real person without practicing their skills to perfection on inanimate objects first. (This was a process I detailed in *The Reluctant Dom.*) A skilled Dom can literally brush the bottom's skin while still making the whip crack. Sometimes, the psychological impact of the sound of the whip is the point, not making contact with the skin. Or, you don't always have to make it crack.

An improperly thrown whip can not only hurt, it can seriously injure someone, especially if the tail wraps around the person and cuts into them.

Canes come in a variety of materials and varieties from whippy rattan canes to heavy Plexiglas rods. They can be plain or have adorned handles. They can be punishment canes or heavy schoolmaster-style canes. You can literally slice skin open or cause internal injuries if you misuse a cane. You can also use one to give someone a pleasurable feeling, almost like a massage. It's all in how you use it.

Floggers can range from made of strips of fur (for sensual play) to knotted cord (for pain) and everything in between. How a flogger is constructed and how it's used determines how it feels to the sub. Some subs want stingy, some want thuddy. Soft, wide leather strips (sometimes called mop floggers) can produce a pleasant sensation similar to a massage. Sometimes only one is used at a time, sometimes the top will use two at a time. Sometimes the top simply uses the flogger, sometimes they use very practiced, almost choreographed movements.

Riding crops, yes, like what you use on a horse, can produce different sensations depending on how and where they're used. They can be used to cause pain or to tickle. I saw one creative female Dominant tickle her male submissive's balls with the flapper on her crop, and she tickled him until he was practically dancing. Depending on the

shape and size of the flapper, it can slap or sting (narrow tends to sting more than wide ones).

Paddles come in a wide variety of materials and configurations, depending on how they're meant to be used.

SAFETY ISSUES: NEVER use a paddle, or most other implements, around the spine, kidneys, face, chest, belly, or genitals. Hard strikes with implements like paddles, canes, and crops should vary location around the buttocks and thighs (avoiding the tailbone) to prevent hitting too often on the same spot. Softer implements can be used around the shoulders, arms, and legs if done with care. Caveat, if you're going for genitals, be VERY careful how you do it so you don't injure someone. Hurting them, and hurting them in a BAD way, are two different things! Also, if a person has nipple or genital piercings, you must be careful not to snag those with an implement.

Chapter Four: Let's Play

As I mentioned before, it's impossible for me to cover every aspect of WIITWD in this book. But here are a few more things you might run across while researching the BDSM world. Also remember that these things are not exclusive. Someone can be involved in only one aspect, or multiple aspects, no matter how contradictory that might seem. Welcome to the irony inherent in the lifestyle.

* * * *

1. Dom/me and sub. (D/s) Whether a straight or gay couple, whether they live it full time or not, as I mentioned before the variety can span the full spectrum from nearly-vanilla to off-the-charts kinky. Outside of play, they may have a totally "vanilla" relationship, or one that doesn't involve any sort of power exchange. They might not engage in any type of pain or bondage play. A woman whose submissive might take your nuts off if you try to lay a hand on her if she's not into that kind of play.

2. Master/Mistress and slave. (M/s) Again, straight or gay, how this tends to differ from a D/s relationship is there usually is some flavor of TPE involved. They might engage in it full-time, or only in play, but generally if a couple labels themselves M/s they tend to range closer to the full-time end of the scale. There might be no "play" involved other than the actual M/s dynamic in their lives, or they might be hard-core sceners, or anything in between.

3. Top/bottom. As I mentioned before, a Top can be anyone who's taking the dominant role in the scene. A bottom is the person being topped. These terms are also used frequently in m/m fiction where the one being fucked (or giving a blow job) is "bottoming" and the one doing the fucking is the "top."

4. Scene. This might be elaborately staged and negotiated in advanced, or it might simply be one person going up to another and saying, "Hey, you want to play?" and the other says, "Sure." It depends on the players and how well they know each other. A scene can be in private or in public.

5. Pain slut/pain pig. The terms are interchangeable, and basically means someone who gets off on pain and wants an intense level of play.

6. Impact play. I covered this earlier, it means getting smacked.

7. Bondage. Tying someone up or otherwise restraining them, sometimes just to leave them like that for a while, sometimes to do other things to them while they are immobile. Note that some people just enjoy being tied up and unable to move, and that is their kink.

8. Electro play. There are various devices (USE WITH CARE ONLY AFTER PROPER INSTRUCTION!) that use electricity to produce sensations. One popular device is called the Violet Wand and produces a sensation similar to a static shock.

9. Wax play. Just what it means, having hot wax applied and removed, and we're not talking about a Brazilian, either. You can't just use any candle, you need one that doesn't melt at a high temperature to prevent burning the subject. Also, be careful about open flames. Do not attempt this until you've taken a class in it.

10. Fire play. Just what it means, playing with fire. Again, be very careful, and DO NOT ATTEMPT unless you've taken a class in it. Think fire eaters taken to the nth degree and doing things you probably never dreamed of. You can seriously injure or kill someone if you attempt this without proper training and equipment.

11. Needle play. This is acupuncture taken up a few notches. Again, do not attempt this unless trained. Not to mention the biohazard aspect of preventing infection and injury, as well as preventing the spread of communicable blood-borne agents.

12. Knife play. As stated. Sometimes used in conjunction with wax play (to remove the hardened wax from the subject's skin). Sometimes to draw blood, sometimes not. DO NOT ATTEMPT unless you've been trained and have taken all appropriate precautions.

13. Cupping. This isn't just a kinky thing, it's been around for thousands of years. There are a few variations, but basically it's an ancient Chinese practice using cups (sometimes in conjunction with fire) to suck the air out of the cup so it adheres to the skin. I had this done to me once, on my shoulder. In my case, I bruised like crazy, but they disappeared in a few days. The effect was similar to a really deep tissue massage, and combined with the heat (the Dom who cupped my shoulder used fire cupping) it felt sooo good. To prevent injury, you should receive training in this technique before you attempt it.

14. Breath play. DO NOT ATTEMPT. This is a type of erotic asphyxiation, a version of "the choking game" kids are playing. If done improperly, you can easily kill (or die).

15. Gun play. DO NOT ATTEMPT. Yes, people use real guns. Presumably unloaded, but a recent case in Maine, in April of 2009, where a man died during a gunplay scene proves that no matter how many precautions you take, tragic accidents can happen.

16. Mindfuck. Just what it means. Some sadist prefer mental to physical sadism. Some sadists who are into inflicting physical pain also use mindfucks to intensify the sub's experience. This could be anything from threatening to do something to them, to humiliation, or anything else that tortures the psyche instead of the body.

17. Sensual sadist. When someone is referred to as being one of these, they tend more toward the softer side of the play scale, or enjoy doing things like forced orgasm scenes rather than inflicting pain.

18. Service-oriented sub/obedience-oriented sub. It's not uncommon for a submissive to simply want to serve, not be involved in bondage or other kinds of play. Whether acting as a household servant or rubbing feet or serving as a footstool or other piece of furniture, they simply want to be of service. An obedience-oriented sub might take other kinds of play if ordered by their Dominant, but it's the act of submitting to that play, not the play itself, that gets the sub's rocks off.

19. Homoflexible, heteroflexible, gay for you, straight for you, gender fluid. These are terms that basically differ from bisexuality in that people who are bisexual find themselves readily attracted to people of both genders without feeling locked into one particular orientation. People who consider themselves flexible generally associate with one sexual orientation or the other, but in limited cases they might find themselves attracted enough to a person that they would switch teams for that person. Gay for you and straight for you generally refer to a person only feeling an attraction for one specific person opposite of their normal orientation, or that one person has some special quality or attraction that they would be willing to do them.

Gender fluid is a person who doesn't box themselves into one particular gender, but it doesn't just refer to sexual orientation. For example, a straight man might consider himself gender fluid and ignore certain societal norms. This is a very grey area, and if someone labels themselves as gender fluid, they would be the best person to tell you what that means to them.

20. Sissification, sissy maid. It's not uncommon for a straight male to be in a relationship where his female Dominant literally dresses him up like a girl. This is different from cross-dressing in that he's doing it under her orders and direction. He might enjoy it or the humiliation aspect of it might be a turn-on for him. This is a perfect place to remind you that cross-dressers might or might not be gay. Many are straight.

21. Fisting. Just what it says, someone takes their fist and...um...inserts it. If it's a male bottom (literally) you know exactly where that fist is going. If it's a woman bottom, it could be anal or vaginal.

22. Animal play. I covered this already. It does NOT involve real animals, just people dressing up and acting as animals. Puppy, pony, and cat/kitten play are the most common, but I've heard of rabbits and others.

23. Queening. Someone, usually a guy, has their face sat upon. Sometimes simply to give oral pleasure to the (usually) woman on top, sometimes as part of watersports/scat play.

24. Pegging. The woman wears a strap-on and fucks the guy. There are plenty of straight guys who enjoy this. The prostate, when properly stimulated, is almost like hitting the G-spot on a woman.

25. Mummification. Sometimes with plastic wrap or specially made Latex vacuum sacks, this basically means being rendered unable to move.

26. Clubs, playspaces. Remember when writing that if a club is open to the public, most likely there are public nudity and indecency laws that must be adhered to, especially if they serve alcohol. Meaning, usually, women's nipples must be covered and genitals (men and women) must not be exposed. Sexual contact like intercourse and oral sex is usually prohibited, although touching (as long as genitals are not exposed) can be flexible in some cases.

Private clubs, usually membership only, or private dungeons in commercial locations, are frequently set up in commercial warehouse districts where zoning laws won't conflict much with their activities. There might or might not be sexual contact allowed, but they might prohibit exchanges of bodily fluid (meaning no unsafe sex). Rules vary from place to place depending on local laws. Private clubs set up in private locations, or play at a private home, can vary depending on house rules. Some allow anything goes as long as it's consensual, some have rules that must be followed. So before you write a public sex scene, remember to keep your location and applicable laws in mind if you're going for accuracy. For an example of this, in *Love Slave for Two: Beginnings* I have two scenes where one takes place in a public club with one level of play, and another takes place in a private club with a broader variety of play. Both scenes were based on real-life places, although the people were totally fiction.

27. Munches. A munch is a gathering, usually at a local restaurant, of a local group of kinksters. It can be a regularly scheduled thing. Usually everyone shows up dressed vanilla, because of the chance of the general public being around.

28. Aftercare. Depending on the type and intensity of the scene, and depending on the players involved, it's not unusual for a submissive to need aftercare from the Dominant. This varies from person to person and relationship to relationship. Not getting the proper aftercare can possibly lead a sub to subdrop.

29. Bootblacking. This is a practice commonly seen in the leather community, and sometimes involves strict rituals and protocols, depending on the group/individual. Basically, the submissive shines the Dominant's boots/shoes. (This is a subject you could almost devote an entire book to.)

30. Dungeonmaster. I've seen authors use this to mean some mysterious "trainer" kind of person. The truth is, the Dungeonmaster, or DM, is a person or persons who make sure people are following the rules and playing safely. These are more common in public clubs and in larger private clubs, but in a private party environment where just a few people are gathered together, or at a private home, usually there is no "official" DM. Also, I've been to events at public clubs

where there weren't DMs, just employees or volunteers with "staff" shirts on so you could find them easily. Some of them also doubled as security and bouncers. Plus, if a group of people knows each other pretty well, they're usually watching out for each other.

Chapter Five: What NOT to Write

If I had a dollar for every BDSM story I've read where the author committed some sort of sin that pulled me out of the story, I wouldn't need to be a writer. For example, using handcuffs in suspension. When I read that scene in the book (I won't name the offender) I literally was pulled out of "readerspace" and it totally ruined the story for me.

If you doubt what I'm saying, spend some time trolling the Amazon.com erotica discussion forums where readers don't hesitate to state what they hate in a book. No, you can't please every reader, and what one might hate, another could absolutely adore.

1. Do. Your. Research.
2. NEVER have your hero/heroine drug someone. EVER. That is predatory (I know I mentioned this before) and NOT something that normally happens.

3. Don't have your characters get drunk/stoned before playing. In real life, most people play sober. In fact, at many play parties and clubs, it's a rule you have to agree to if you want to play, you must be sober. It's a safety issue.

4. Do not have your bound character, especially one who is suspended, left alone. (Unless it's a bad guy doing it.) Also, most people cannot sleep bound all the time. It's a health and safety issue (deep vein thrombosis is a real concern, as is tissue damage from blocked blood flow).

5. Try to avoid having your BDSM being used as a basis for "bad" things. That's a stereotype that kinksters are these weird, crazy people who get off on beating each other. Most of them are normal people you might know in real life.

6. Be logical. Don't have a person just go through a super-heavy, intense scene, and five minutes later they're heading in to work like nothing's wrong. Maybe that happens in real life on occasion, but usually a sub who's just been through a heavy scene doesn't want to do anything but wind down and chill out.

7. Ditch the stereotypes. Yes, a Male Dom with a female sub is one of the most common configurations out there. But shake it up. What if the Male Dom is actually only 5' 6" and a geek in real life? What if he embraces his kinkiness and doesn't care if anyone knows? Play around with the norms and try to come up with something other than a cookie-cutter answer.

8. While in real life yes, there are people who run "training schools" for subs and slaves, for the most part people figure it out as they go, usually through trial and a lot of error. Avoid the old, "Oh, she signed up for slave school," theme. That one has been done to death and is becoming a cliché. However, many kinky conventions do offer seminars on various lifestyle topics, from bondage to toys and everything in between.

9. Remember your reader. You might be turned on by having a guy (or more than one) ordering you around in the name of "that's how we do things," but remember you've got a lot of readers out there—your largest commercial fiction demographic is, at this writing, hetero (or het) women—who will toss the book if they read that. You'd better do a lot of backstory and lead-up to that point to explain why the heroine would tolerate that kind of treatment and to make it sexy and not stupid.

10. Having a hero toss the heroine over his lap and spank her is *not* inherently BDSM. It's spanking. There are plenty of spankers who consider themselves kinky, but not into BDSM. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but don't label it a BDSM story if you're only using spanking as another plot device. If you want to write a BDSM story, you need to get the characters into that dynamic.

11. People in BDSM relationships go through the same trials and tribulations as people in vanilla relationships. Sometimes even more so. There's not this magical "I command, you obey" dynamic all the time in every relationship. There will be times, even in the most high protocol Master/slave relationship, where things change and arrangements are renegotiated. Never forget: people are not robots. Unless, of course, in your speculative fiction they are robots. Then knock yourself out.

12. Shit happens. (Sometimes literally.) Equipment breaks, people get muscle cramps or faint, power goes out, one or both people might not be in the mood to play because of a bad day, or the kids have a cold and can't go to Grandma's for the weekend, or whatever. People are not machines. Perfection doesn't exist. Don't be afraid to write a little imperfection into your characters, it humanizes them to your readers. Remember, these are real people juggling real lives, jobs, family, non-kinky social obligations, along with their kink.

13. Being a submissive (or Dominant) is only one aspect of their lives, not the sum of their existence. The kink aspect is just one part of their life even if it's a large part. Many submissives consider their submission a gift to their Dominant. This isn't ancient Rome, and anything other than consensual "slavery" is illegal. Being a submissive woman does not lower your I.Q. Being a submissive man does not make you a wimpy wuss. I've heard it said that it takes more balls to be a submissive man than it does to be a dominant man, because it takes a much stronger character to not only have that kind of trust in another person to submit to them, but to buck societal norms and not be a dominant man.

14. Anyone who is a serious lifestyle Dominant takes their role to protect those in their care very seriously.

15. Straight guys like anal sex and anal play. No, not all of them, but plenty of them do, and even more of them like it but are afraid to admit it because they think it makes them gay. No, it does not make them gay, it makes them human. Don't be afraid to have your straight guy secure enough to enjoy taking it up the back door from his gal (via butt plug or strap-on or finger).

16. Which brings me to an extremely important point: anal sex requires lubrication to be enjoyable. The rectum and anus are not self-lubricating. Unless, of course, you're writing speculative fiction with non-human characters, then knock yourself out and make it so.

17. Please, stop already with the wide-eyed woman gasping, "Oh. My. GOD! Will it fit?" when the hero's willy flops out of his pants. Yes, it will fit, unless you've written speculative fiction and the guy is built like a French baguette. Women give birth to *babies*. Believe me, the cock had to get in there somehow, and I have yet to hear of a man's penis that is larger around than the average six-pound baby's head. This old chestnut has been DONE. TO. DEATH. Stop it. Your readers will appreciate it.

18. Most guys are not hung like horses, and most women can't climax from one or two pumps inside them. The average male cock is around five to seven inches when erect. Some guys are growers instead of showers. You don't need to write the guy as a pencil dick, but most readers prefer a little realism they can relate to. The woman who needs a "helping hand" to get off because riding the pork sword (and if you use that purple phrase in a book I swear to the Goddess I will beat you like a red-headed step-child) doesn't do it for her. The hero with a slight paunch. The occasional fart during sex. Realism doesn't have to be nasty morning-after breath, but remember not everyone is perfect. Heroines who have a few more pounds on their frame than an anorexic string bean are very popular. So are heroes with a little realism. They don't all have to be six-foot-seven Norse gods with abs of titanium. (I like to kill off characters that look like that in my writing...)

19. This is directed at straight male erotica writers: NEVER refer to women's breasts as anything relating to sports items or produce. No cantaloupes, no softballs, nothing. Another point directed at straight male authors who wish to make it as a commercial erotica writer: your largest commercial target demographic, based on purchasing patterns, is het women. Write for *them*. Most of you male erotica writers who aren't gay men writing for gay men (and honestly, a lot of us het women *love* the gay male erotica writers) totally fuck up the story for us het women. If you want to learn how to write erotica for het women, *read* erotica written by het women. We don't focus much on the woman. We want to BE the woman (or the man, in the case of m/m stories) getting done. We could give a shit in most cases about long drawn-out descriptions of the heroine. We want to *be* her. So quit trying to turn us on by writing like a guy, and try writing like a girl (or like a gay guy). We also like reading about what the characters are thinking, not just what they're seeing or doing. And if you can't write about the hero because it makes you squicky to talk about a guy like that, you really have no business being an erotica writer. There is a reason why the majority of successful erotica writers are either women or gay men. If you want to be one of them, learn how to write like one of them. (Of course, if you're just writing for your own pleasure, write whatever makes you happy.)

20. Oh, and another stereotype, quit with the heroines with a waist so tiny the hero's hands can span it. Most of us are a size twelve or more, and we hate the skinny girls. Write for US. Use heroes and heroines older than thirty (or forty, or even fifty) on occasion. We lived our twenties, we want to relate to people. Not every woman is 5'3", and not every guy is over 6' tall.

21. Try writing outside the old clichés. Instead of the wealthy man of industry, make your hero a mechanic or taxi driver or something the average person can relate to. Ditto your heroine, give her an occupation other than writer, newspaper reporter, or kick-ass take no prisoners corporate lawyer. (Yes, I'm guilty of that too.) No, I'm not saying you have to do that all the time, because yes, it is fun to escape into a book where it's totally not like real life. But it's nice to pick up a book sometimes where you can relate to the characters.

22. Don't write your story based on what you read in other stories. There's a good chance those other authors got at least something wrong, unless you know for certain they're in the lifestyle or did a lot of research first. Do. Your. Research.

23. SAFE SEX. Condoms. You don't have to stop the story to have a long, drawn-out discussion about it, but USE THEM. It can be as simple as inserting (ha-ha) a simple, "He sheathed himself in a condom and..." We don't need to know he went to the store and bought them special, and we don't need a huge long negotiation scene about them. It's assumed people involved in kinky sex probably have ready access to condoms. But I've heard so many complaints from readers about stories where condoms weren't used when they should have been, and I've heard praise for stories where they were used, that it doesn't hurt to USE THEM to avoid pissing off your readers. Readers commonly expect condom use in non-monogamous or non-established relationships. (Unless, of course, not using a condom is a plot point meant to lead to a complication like an STD or pregnancy.) There is some flexibility when dealing with paranormal/speculative fiction, or if the couple is monogamous and has been together long enough to preclude their use, but for contemporary stories, at least mention their use.

24. Avoid purple prose. Seriously. The aforementioned "pork sword" is at the top of that list. Avoid swords, sheaths (although using sheath as a verb is usually fine as long as it's not overused), cream, all those well-abused purple prose words that make editors and readers cringe. Also, avoid being too clinical. "He inserted his penis in her vagina" reads like a rape report, not hot erotic fiction. Also, avoid overuse of "hissed" and other non-standard dialog tags. Said and asked are the two best ones to use, although sparing use of others is all right. Also, I will hunt you down and make you write "I will not use dominate when I should use dominant" a thousand times by hand if you use "dominate" as

anything other than a verb.

25. And!! Oh!! AVOID EXLAMATION POINTS!!! Exclamation points are used to denote screaming or shock! Overuse makes editors' eyes twitch! No, seriously!!

Chapter Six: Helpful Information

The following isn't an endorsement of any book or site, it's simply provided as a starting point, reference, and some of these I've used for research as well. Nothing beats talking to people in real life, however. Assume any websites or products are not work-safe or suitable for viewing by minors.

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FetLife.com: <http://fetlife.com> is like a kinky Facebook. You can hook up with people in your local area.

<http://www.leathernroses.com/> is a fantastic resource site for all things BDSM. Make SURE you read the essays about Dominance and submission. If you want to cry, read the beautiful essay by maggie about losing her Master/husband on 9/11. <http://www.leathernroses.com/submission/maggielosingmaster.htm>

Taken in Hand: <http://www.takeninhand.com/>

<http://www.steel-door.com/Chamber.html> Lots of articles.

Disciplinary Wives Club: <http://www.disciplinarywivesclub.com/>

Sub-Shop.com Adult Store: <http://www.sub-shop.com/>

Extremerestraints.com Adult Store: <http://www.extremerestraints.com/>

Stockroom.com Bondage Store: <http://www.stockroom.com/>

"Screw the Roses, Give Me Thorns" (book) by Philip Miller and Molly Devon

"The Loving Dominant" (book) by John Warren and Libby Warren

"SM 101: A Realistic Introduction" (book) by Jay Wiseman

(I guarantee you, if you start searching for those books on Amazon.com, they'll pop up a lot of other suggestions for you.)

Jack Rinella's site: <http://www.leatherviews.com/>

<http://www enslavement.org.uk/> Info on internal enslavement.

<http://www.seekers.org.uk/> Another good D/s site.

<http://www.windlegends.org/Eros.htm> Erotica editing descriptions.

<http://www.darkererotica.net/EroticThesaurus.html> Erotica thesaurus.

"Secretary" (movie, 2002) starring James Spader and Maggie Gyllenhaal. A little over the top in some areas, but actually a fairly realistic depiction in many ways of a D/s Sadist/masochist relationship.

"What Worse Place Can I Beg in Your Love?" (book) by Syd McGinley. This novella is a futuristic/sci-fi m/m piece detailing what happens when a human male is captured and becomes a male alien's pet. The man was already a submissive gay male. It is a totally mind-blowing look at one aspect of the Master/slave (or Owner/pet) dynamic.

The Kinky Dictionary: Glossary of BDSM Terms: <http://www.xeromag.com/fvbdglossary.html>

Play party etiquette (one set of guidelines, but not necessarily the "rules" for any particular party): <http://www.domsub.info/playpartyett.shtml>

Conclusion

I hope you've found our little journey informative, eye-opening, and helpful. Again, I cannot stress enough, the information I've given you is not meant to be any final word on the topic, just a starting point. You need to do research for yourself. In terms of fiction, yes, you can absolutely take literary license in some ways, but try to keep an eye on reality so you don't wander into the realm of the absurd. If you're looking to possibly get into the lifestyle, then I hope I've given you some helpful information to get you started on your journey.

Lastly, *never* undertake any of the activities listed in this work without proper training, experience, and safety precautions. I am not responsible for you hurting yourself (or someone else) in a bad way.

About the Author

Tymer Dalton (who also writes as Lesli Richardson) lives in southwest Florida with her husband (aka “The World’s Best Husband™”), son, and too many dogs. She is a bestselling author in several genres, with over twenty published titles—and counting—to her credit. The author of works such as *The Reluctant Dom*, *Domme by Default*, *Fierce Radiance*, and *Trouble Comes in Threes*, she is happy to know that having a pervy and twisted imagination can lead to something other than incarceration. She is also actively involved in her local BDSM lifestyle community.

She loves to hear from readers, so drop by her website to keep track of her current news, reviews, and snarkage.

<http://www.tymerdalton.com>

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