

Composing Words:

1. Be a **BOOKWORM!** A musical composer must listen to lots of music. A painter needs to look at lots of paintings as well as lots of subjects to paint. It's sort of like breathing: inhaling and exhaling. You need lots of *internal language* in order to develop your own voice. The best part is that you can lie in bed with a good book and call it work!
2. Have a **BLUEPRINT** (a plan). It can be as simple as *the hero goes out in the world, something happens, and the hero is **changed***. (Joseph Campbell) You can also create some characters, put them in a situation, and see what happens. (Steven King)
3. Open up your **SACK of SENSES**. Use all five of them. What does lake water taste like? What does a basketball game sound like? How does your favorite blanket smell? Detail makes your writing interesting and gives it life.
4. Never write without a **TROLL JAR**. We each have our own ugly little troll who sits on our shoulder when we try to write or draw and whispers, "That's stupid," or "That's the worst thing you ever wrote," or "You should just crumple this story up and throw it in the trash!" This is called your *internal censor*. If you listen to it you may never finish that story. Stuff your troll in his jar and go ahead and let yourself write the *baddest* story that was ever written. You might be surprised at how good it is—and if it's not—you can fix it later.
5. **BEGIN WITH A BANG** and **END WITH A BOUNCE!** (*Charlotte's Web*, by E. B. White) Now you've come to the end, are you *done*? No way! It's time for:

REVISION

1. Use your **X-RAY GLASSES** to spot mistakes visually. Look for spelling, punctuation, and grammar mistakes.
2. Use your **EAR SHARPENERS**. A good way to find mistakes is by listening. Find a partner or a critique group and read your story out loud to them. You will find yourself correcting your story as you go. This is a good way to spot overused words ("little," "and," etc.), plot inconsistencies (daffodils blooming in October), and awkward phrases ("the mouse around the house did run"—just say "the mouse ran around the house!")

3. Don't be afraid to get out your **SAW** and cut the "dead wood." If in doubt, leave it out! Everything in your story should have a reason for being there. Like scraps of fabric, you can always use good bits somewhere else.
4. Your most important tool is **BUTT GLUE!** I've had at least ten rejections for every story that's been accepted. If you throw enough spaghetti at a wall, some of it will stick! Being a writer takes *perspiration* as well as *inspiration*. Don't quit! Butt Glue is the magic formula which makes a writer's (or anyone's) dreams come true.
5. **COPYRIGHT 2005, by _____.** Now that you really are done, you have a lot to be proud of. A copyright says that this is *your work* and nobody else's. You are not too young to copyright your work. I wrote the first draft of *The Kingfisher's Gift* in seventh grade. It needed work, but it was a good idea. You have good ideas, too. Believe in yourself!