

## Creative Writing Tips - Jeni Mawter

### 1) Love language

**Play with language** - crosswords, word games, tongue twisters

**Jot down sayings** of kids, brothers, sisters etc. - Settle petal. What's the hurry, Murray?

**Jot down funny comments.**

eg. I'm the youngest in my French class, Mum. They're all dicks (dix) and I'm a Smurf (neuf).

**Collect** interesting quotes, clippings etc.

### 2) Avoid Bad English

**Swear words** - these are boring. Think of new ones. eg. Catherine Jinks in Pagan's Crusade (1992) 'Christ in a cream cheese sauce.'

**Watch for tautologies** - two twins

**Do not clutter sentences.**

The girl with a pierced nose and eyebrow pranced across the room like a peacock trying to attract its mate.

**Do not give the wrong chronological order.**

They opened the book with the page torn by Jamie last week when he threw it at his brother because he was annoying him.

**Don't say the same thing twice or repeat information.**

Big mansion

**Don't state the obvious.**

The clouds were in the sky. The sugar was sweet.

**Don't be ambiguous.**

Cotton Socks Sale

**Don't be confusing.**

It's blue because it's green.

**Clichés are boring.** They have been overused.

I was as cold as ice.

**Don't be pompous.** Avoid euphemisms unless they are part of your story.

rest room/toilet

**Avoid unnecessarily long words.**

'She was preoccupied with the protestations of her stomach' should be 'She noticed her tummy rumble.'

**Avoid unnecessary words.** eg Adjectives, adverbs and fancy verbs

She screamed loudly.

It was just so freezing cold.

**Awkward Rhythm**

It wasn't an accident that she actually went to Antarctica.

**Show, don't tell.**

Richard is the tallest in our class and loves to read.

Richard came flying into the car whacking his head on the doorframe. 'Ouch!' he said, 'I always do that when I'm reading.'

**Don't forget to include the shading in your stories.**

- Feelings (anger, jealousy, fear, happiness, boredom, sadness)
- Senses (sight, touch, taste, feeling, sound)
- thoughts
- Irritations (eg. itchy label, socks that fall down, scratchy jumper)

**Choose names carefully**

- Character (may also be setting)
- Place/setting

**3) Common Writing Mistakes**

- **Clichéd or unoriginal stories.** Common stories are:  
'How the elephant got his trunk,' type stories

'A Day in the life of...' or 'My life as a...'

'... and then I woke up and it was all a dream.'

Retelling stories from movies, TV, video games etc

Re-telling fairy tales.

Overly melodramatic stories. (Don't sound real)

Didactic stories (ones about overcoming adversity)

With thanks to Nestle Write Around Australia - [www.writearound.com.au](http://www.writearound.com.au)

- **Weak opening paragraph.**  
You must grab the reader in the first sentence/paragraph to 'hook' them into reading more.  
Don't pad out your opening with unnecessary information.
- **Weak characters.**  
They all must have some defining trait eg speech, appearance, behaviour, attitudes that makes them life-like and believable.
- **Poor structure.** No logic.  
Can't have gaps or leaps of logic. Every scene must have warmth/conflict.  
A common error is to have a first person narrator die at the end of the story without explaining how they have been able to tell the story.
- **Poor finish/conclusion.** Don't go on and on.
- **Not enough dialogue.** Too much indirect speech.  
eg. She said she wanted to go but she was too scared to ask her dad.
- **Poor language skills.**  
Watch for grammar, punctuation, sentence construction, and spelling.
- **Weak title** or title that doesn't fit.
- **Passive Voice.** You must aim for an active voice.  
eg. 'The pole was hit by the car' should be 'The car hit the pole.'
- **Sentences all the same length.** Need variety in structure and length.  
eg dialogue, statement, problem, action, description of people/place/time, question.