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What did it take to become a writer?
By Christina Bauer, author of
The Pirate Queen, A Timewalker Journey

One: Doing Homework

- Being a writer means being a researcher
- Quiz: how well do you understand pirates... before and after doing research

Two: Reading... a lot

- My mind is like a kaleidoscope: I put thoughts, ideas and stories into it; then turn them around and create something new
- If I put the same raw materials into my mind as everyone else, I'll get the same results
- Creating something innovative is the key

Three: Writing with action verbs

- "Is" is the worst verb ever
- No matter what you're writing, it will be better if you use action verbs
- Activity: take the sample chapter and circle all the action verbs, like flash, press and break

Four: Showing, never telling

- It's more exciting to show something happening
- For example, I could tell my readers that Jess is tired. Instead I show them by saying she forced "her bleary emerald eyes to open wide."
- Activity: take sample chapter and circle all the places which "show versus tell."

Five: Using many senses

- Sight: How do things look as they happen? For example, saying "the clock's cracked screen flashed 11:43 PM" instead of "it is really late at night."
- Sound: What sound effects can you add? Creaks and crashes are some of my favorites.
- Feeling: How does it feel to be scared? For example: "Tension shot down Jess's spine."

Six: Personifying things

- Give human qualities to things
- For example: "Creepy posters of leprechauns with eyes as big as saucers stared down from the walls."

Seven: Creating similes and metaphors

- Compare two things to make writing come alive
- Similes use "like" or "as." Example: "Bits of stuffing from the ragged teddy bear cascaded to the floor like so many snowflakes."
- Metaphors do not use "like" or "as." Example (this one is not from my sample chapter, but from one of my favorite poems): "Fog crept in one little cat feet."

Eight: Writing an outline first

- Many different ways of writing, not all authors use an outline
- First I define what's called a character arc: your character has to start out one place emotionally and end up in another. For Jess, she starts out scared and insecure and ends up... well, I don't want to give it all away
- Second, I create a short outline of what main plot points move her from where she starts to where she ends