

Iza Trapani's Tips for Aspiring Writers:

- 1) **Read!** Read as many children's books as you can get your hands on.
- 2) **Sense of wonder-** Look at the world around you with childlike awe. Children find joy in the simplest things. When you see the world through the eyes of a child, what a truly wonderful world it is!
- 3) **Engage your readers-** Make them giggle, or move them to tears. Comfort them. Delight them. Inspire them. Above all, tell the story with a big heart.
- 4) **Age group-** Is your story for preschoolers, early or middle grades? Is it a concept book, picture book, chapter book, or early reader? Consider your audience, identify with them and tell the story in a way that is suited to them.
- 5) **Originality-** Ideas are universal, but stories need to be original. Make sure you tell your story in a fresh, new way.
- 6) **Poetry or prose?** You choose, but if you write in rhyme, the meter must be consistent. Awkward, uneven rhyme will stand out more than poorly written prose. Conversely, good rhyme will not redeem a weak story.
- 7) **Language-** Whether your story is poignant or playful, we have a rich language of words to choose from. Be creative and expressive. Have fun with words.
- 8) **Imagery-** If it will be a picture book, consider the illustrations. Does your story evoke good imagery? Is there enough action in the story to suggest exciting and varied scenes?
- 9) **Plot-** Something has to happen! Keep the plot simple and uncontrived, but not insignificant. Most children's books are 32 pages long. The first 3 to 5 pages are front matter (title, copyright, dedication), leaving 27 to 29 pages to tell the story. That's not a lot, so make sure the plot moves forward from page to page. Avoid superfluous text. Think CPR-concise, precise and rounded.
- 10) **Tension-** A simple plot can still build with tension. Keep it moving.
- 11) **Resolution-** Round out and resolve the story at the end. Tie it all together. Do not leave questions unanswered. If the story is sad always end with a message of hope.
- 12) **Revise!** There is always another way of saying something. Read it out loud over and over again. Read it to your family and friends and especially children, not so much for their feedback (they'll probably love it because you wrote it!), but to see how it reads. It's always different reading it to someone else. If there are areas that don't flow well, fix them. Be honestly critical of your work. Eliminate words, phrases or entire paragraphs if they don't need to be in the story- regardless of how attached you are to them, or how hard you worked on them. Make sure your story is as polished as you can make it before you send it off. Good luck!

Some suggested reading (in addition to lots of children's books):

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Publishing Children's Books by Harold D. Underdown
The Children's Writer's & Illustrator's Market *Writer's Digest Books*(updated annually)
Writing Books for Children and *Take Joy: A Book for Writers* both by Jane Yolen
You Can Write Children's Books by Tracey E. Dills