

**10 WRITING TIPS
TO MAKE
YOUR MOTHER
PROUD**

**FIRST BE CLEAR,
THEN BE PRETTY.**

Mom always says you can't decorate a dung heap. Likewise, you can't craft that perfect sentence without first being clear about exactly what you want to say. **So focus on meaning first. Then dress it up.**

DO UNTO OTHERS.

No one likes reading overblown, fancy-pants sentences filled with words you need a dictionary to understand. And Mom doesn't either. So keep it simple. Think about how you'd like people to communicate with you, and **write what you'd like to read.**

TALK IT OUT.

When you're at a loss for words and can't find the phrasing you want, stop writing and start talking. **Think about what you're trying to say, then say it out loud.** Once you know how you'd say it in conversation with Mom, type it out and work from there.

**TRUTH IS
OVERRATED.**

Mom would never tell you to lie, but she would say that a little makeup brings out your best features. So **enhance the important stuff** by adding a little color where it counts.

SAVE THE BEST FOR LAST.

The most important sentence in a paragraph is the last one. Of course, you will have to make sure your topic sentence is tight, because that's how readers know the purpose of the paragraph. But the real trick is getting your reader to stay with you across the paragraph break to begin reading the next one. If that final sentence packs a punch Mom would be proud of, your reader will be sure to want more.

“IS” ISN’T.

Verbs are the heart of any sentence. But when we’re rushed we tend to rely on the easiest one: “is.” Mom would tell you that **too many is’s cripple your copy**, and so do all its variants: “are,” “was,” “were,” and “be.” To bring emotion and action into your writing, count all the is’s in your draft. It’ll tell you if your verbs need work.

READ IT OUT LOUD.

Before it's finished, you'll have to pass Mom's soapbox test. If you can't get through without stumbling, there's still work to be done. Hearing it aloud will reveal pacing problems and awkward turns of phrase. And it'll **make sure that your writing is human and readable**, which is what Mom wants.

GET A SECOND OPINION.

Mom's not always around to give her opinion. So find yourself a reader and get their opinion. Ask them where they get bored, where they get confused, and where they get annoyed. Then ask them what they understood, because often they understand something different than what you meant. **Your work will be stronger if you get a little outside perspective.**

**NO, IT'S NOT
FINISHED.**

Mom always says **rewriting is writing and writing is rewriting**. You can take heart in the knowledge that nothing's ever perfect the first time around. That first completed version of whatever it is you're writing isn't actually complete at all. So finish that draft and get started on the next one.

EAT YOUR GREENS.

Mom always said so. And what she meant was that you can't create text with nutritional value if you don't get food for thought. So **take active steps to keep your writing healthy.** Read books on writing, form a writers group, or write by committee. And really, eat those greens. They're good for you and—you never know—you might even start to like them.