1. Keep to two main characters – one male and one female – that way your reader will know which one you are referring to most of the time (he said, she said).

2. You don’t have to be original – only interesting! - it is a good idea to have a few really good stories that you tell well. Adapt these to the task you have been given.

3. Plan a SHORT beginning and a SHORT ending – most of the story should be the middle where things happen and characters think and feel.

4. Plan a resolution in your ending (e.g. solving a problem) and refer to it in the beginning – a good short story has the reader wondering how a problem is going to be resolved - and then it is.

5. Plan you last sentence – ending with a punch leaves your reader smiling. This is the time to be original.

6. Keep your reader informed of what is happening, and what characters are thinking and feeling - we cannot read your mind. If it isn’t written in the story it doesn’t happen (check #10 below).

7. **DON’T** start lots of sentences with the same word - read it over to check and cross out or substitute words to avoid this.

8. Include some direct speech in your story (with correct punctuation) AND AT LEAST ONE piece of indirect speech - avoid using “said” (something like “the doctor replied that he had seen spots like this before but only on a ladybird.” Or “Katy thought to
herself that she had never seen such a strange sight in all her life.

9. Leave at least five minutes to check your story for all of your target points - a finished and corrected story is 100 times better than an unfinished and hurried one - whatever the style and standard.

10. Whenever you are stuck, or taking a break, read the story over to yourself under your breath but mouthing the words - if it sounds right when you read it out it is probably OK. If you pause when you are reading then check there is a pause marker (like a comma or fullstop).

11. Use any spare time to correct spelling - you can try out some attempts on your planning sheet.

12. Make sure your story has at least one question mark (?) exclamation mark (!) and at least three commas (,) - if you know how to use these punctuation marks you need to show off.

13. Use parentheses - either to comment or speak to the reader.

14. Tell your reader something directly - it helps the reader to feel part of the story. He/she thinks they are important to you.