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## Four Tips to Make Your Writing Sing

By  
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My 10-year-old daughter Christa stopped me as I rushed by her on my way to move laundry from the washer to the dryer. She played one note on the piano and asked, “Does this sound off to you?” Since she had a “Doesn’t this sound awful?” look on her face, I knew what I needed to say. “I’ll call the piano tuner.”

When you’re revising your writing, think of yourself as a piano tuner. You’re not tuning keys on a keyboard—you’re tuning your manuscript so it doesn’t hit any wrong notes.

Did you learn to play an instrument as a child? The long hours of practice before you hit the right notes were painful, weren’t they? Ever listen to one person—just one person—hit wrong notes in a choir? Ruined the entire performance, didn’t it?

You want your writing to hit all the right notes. Revising—editing, rewriting—ensures your writing sings. Here are some things that can cause off-key writing:

**Repeated words.** If you use the word *magnificent* in the beginning of chapter one, then it’s not welcome in the chapter again. Use [VisualThesaurus.com](http://VisualThesaurus.com) and find *brilliant* or *glorious*.

**Passive words.** Replace *was*, *have been* or *to be* with one stronger verb. Example: Just three weeks after I found out I *was pregnant*, Rob and I *were taking* the trip of a lifetime. Change: Just three weeks after the pregnancy stick turned blue, Rob and I *took* the trip of a lifetime.

**Unneeded words.** Certain words add nothing to your writing—they’re just the easy way out. Delete words like *really* or *just*. Writing: *She was really sad* is telling and passive. Try: *She pressed the palm of her hand against the dull ache in her chest, waiting for tears that never came.*

**Misspelled words.** You may be the world’s worst speller, but that’s no excuse to be a lazy writer. Word tags misspelled words. Or go to [Misspelled.com](http://Misspelled.com) and type in a word. I typed in *freighter* and it pulled up *freighter*. Typing *inocent* pulled up *innocent*.