

MARILYN SINGER'S TEN TIPS FOR WRITING POETRY

1. Pay attention to the world around you—little things, big things, people, animals, buildings, events, etc. What do you see, hear, taste, smell, feel?
2. Listen to words and sentences. What kind of music do they have? How is the music of poetry different from the music of songs?
3. Read all kinds of poetry. Which poems do you like and why?
4. Read what you write out loud. How does it sound? How could it sound better?
5. Ask yourself: does this poem have to rhyme? Would it be good or better if it didn't? If it should rhyme, what kind of rhyme would be best? (For example, 1st and 2nd lines rhyme; 3rd and 4th lines rhyme—"Roses are red/So is your head/Violets are blue/So is your shoe"; or 1st and 3rd lines rhyme; 2nd and 4th lines rhyme—"What is your name?/Who is your mother?/This poem is quite lame/I should try another.")
6. Ask yourself: does this poem sound phoney? Don't stick in big words or extra words just because you think a poem ought to have them.
7. A title is part of a poem. It can tell you what the poem is about. It can even be another line of the poem.
8. Before you write, think about what you want your whole poem to say.
9. If you end up saying something else, that's okay, too. Poet X.J. Kennedy says, "You intend to write a poem about dogs, say, and *poodle* is the first word you're going to find a rhyme for. You might want to talk about police dogs, Saint Bernards, and terriers, but your need for a rhyme will lead you to *noodle* and *strudel*. The darned poem will make you forget about dogs and write about food instead."
10. Go wild. Be funny. Be serious. Be whatever you want! Use your imagination, your own way of seeing.



Check out "A Blast of Poetry," "What Makes a Good Poem?" and information about Marilyn Singer on her web site: www.marilynsinger.net.