Need some direction? Need some coaching? These were the top ten comments I gave to students last year when developing their blogs.

**THE FIRST 6 WEEKS REFLECTION:**

**These are comments developed during assessing your blogs.**

**THE BASICS**

1. **Write, Write, Write:** The more you write the better you get. Each week you are required to complete at least two blog entries --a personal prompt and a teacher prompt – but you can always write more.
2. **Create, Create, Create:** More writing is always great but you can also mix it up by creating a response in another format. You need only one written entry a week so try responding through creating audio, video, comic strip, photocollage, photographs, etc.

**GIVE ME JUICY WRITING**

1. **Grab me by the throat and squeeze:**  Okay not really but your title and opening paragraph should. Canadian playwright Judith Thompson’s mantra is “Go for the jugular.” Competent writing is nice. Great writing catches your breath, pulls you in, breaks your heart and spits you out. Surpise me, shock me, try to offend me but please don’t bore me (or your reader).
2. **Develop your voice:** Throughout the blogging inquiry, the challenge will be how you write to refelct your own values and opinions. I suspect that you many of you are good at figuring out what the teacher wants to hear. In this case, what I want to hear is what you want to say. Your personal prompts are a perfect vehicle to write about want you want to write about.

In the teacher prompts, I am still wanting to hear your voice but I am looking for how you connect new ideas and information to your own understanding. What happens if you don’t know anything about a subject? Admitting to it doesn’t reflect badly on you but gives you and the reader your starting point. But now I want to read about how you interpret new ideas and what sense you make of it.

1. **Brush up on Grammar and Writing Conventions:** Grammar and writing conventions are form the writer’s tool kit. Better writing happens when you know your tools. Here are areas to brush up on:

A) **Sentences structures:** Short and long. Simple, Complex and Compound. Know the differences and vary your use to give your writing rhythm and contrast. Here is an online quiz to check: http://eslbee.com/cgi-bin/quiztest.cgi?simplecompoundorcomplex

B) **Verb Tenses:** Verbs are the engines of the sentences. By using active, succint and specific verbs, your writing will zing. Rather than writing “I would like to go to the store”, write “I want to go to the store”.

Rather than writing “McGonigcal would like us to play more games”, write “McGongical wants us to play more games.”

A site worth checking out is: <http://www.arts.uottawa.ca/writcent/hypergrammar/> We will also be spotlighting grammar points in class.

1. **Make it Interesting (add more information):**

***Linking:*** Use the bounty of the World Wide Web to demonstrate how your ideas are related to other ideas. Learn how to tag and link to external websites.

***Posting Pictures:*** Relevant pictures always make text easier to read.

1. **Spruce up your look:** Make sure you have completely personalized all editable parts of the word press template. Here is a list to double check:
2. Give your blog an interesting title. It does not have to be your name or your schoolconnect login information.
3. Get rid of the catch phrase: “Just another Student Blogs Sites site”. Put something more interesting
4. Rename the Sample Page. It looks half done when it is there.
5. Play around with graphics.
6. **Market your blog:**  In my experience nothing increases my motivation to write better than an audience. Once you are done posting your blog, brag about it. Tweet out the link and get other’s reading.

**SPECIFIC TIPS FOR TEACHER PROMPTS:**

1. **Make Connections (any connections!):** The blog is the way you communicate what you are learning and thinking about. In many cases there is no one teacher answer.
2. **Reference Other Experiences with Specifics:** Write as specifically as possible about a subject. Often this takes the extra step of looking up the correct spelling of an author’s name or the exact date of an event. This extra step is worth the pay off because it brings a specificty to your writing that helps the reader grasp on to your ideas. Rather than writing “the TED talk on gaming”, write “In Jane McGonigal’s Ted Talk “*Gaming for A Better World”,* she declares we all need to play more games.” Being specific also build credibility and trust with the reader.
3. **Source Your Information:** If you pull out facts from the thin air, I want to see your PHD first. Kidding. Even a professor has to cite his or her work. If you look up a fact, either link the word to where you got the information or paste the link at the bottom of the page. For a blog I am not expecting proper MLA sourcing but I am wanting to trace where you found your information and how you have come to believe what you believe.