Henrietta loved to read. Soon she had read every book on the farm a dozen times, so she went to town to find more. When she spotted people carrying books out of the library, she went inside to wait in line.
When it was Henrietta’s turn, the librarian said, “We have nothing for chickens here. Try the feed store.”

Frustrated, Henrietta clucked at the top of her lungs.

“Buk, buh, buh!”

“Why didn’t you say so?”

The librarian handed her three books.

Henrietta was in reading eggstacy. Every day she read to her aunts, then returned the books to the library for more.
One day Henrietta said, “Reading books is so much fun. Writing books must be eggs hilarating.” She searched the shelves until she found a book about writing. The librarian was impressed.

When she got home, Henrietta read,

“RULE ONE: You need a main character.”

That’s me, Aunt Golda. I’m the main hen here.

The character should be interesting.

That’s me.

No, me!
Aunt Golda won because she was the oldest. Henrietta found a typewriter and began to peck out a story.

Once upon a time there was a hen named Aunt Golda.

RULE TWO: You need to hatch a plot.

A plot of land?

No, plot is what happens in the story. It starts with RULE THREE: Give your main character a problem.

Me, neither.

I don't want any problems.

No way.
Once upon a time there was a hen named Maxine.

Maxine went walking alone in the woods, even though her mother told her it was dangerous.

RULE FOUR: Develop your plot by asking "What if?"

What if Maxine goes into the woods alone?

Her mother should tell her that’s dangerous.
Something bad will happen.

A wolf might be following her.

Suddenly Maxine saw a wolf following her down the path.

Maxine can’t be caught! She must save herself.

What if she shoots the wolf with a cyberspace ray gun?

Then the wolf catches Maxine.

THE END. Good story.

The wolf is toast! THE END. Good story.
That's silly. Hens don't have guns.
RULE FIVE: Write what you know.

What if she hides? We hide from hawks every day.

He can't leave yet.
RULE SIX: Build suspense.

Build a fence?

Suspense, to make the reader worry.

Maxine hid under a bush.

The wolf sniffed. "I smell a delicious young hen nearby." He started creeping toward Maxine's hiding place.

Then the wolf gets bored and leaves.
THE END. Good story.

Then he eats her.
THE END. Good story.
Not yet!

RULE SEVEN: Make your story come alive by using all five senses.

Maxine heard the wolf growl. As he came closer, she saw his sharp teeth and smelled his wolfy body odor.

When he was nearer still, she felt the heat of his icky breath.

When he stuck his head through the leaves, Maxine tasted the bile rising from her gizzard.

Then Maxine dies of fright. THE END. Good story.

That is not THE END! Endings are the hardest part.
Maxine's brother swoops to save her in the nick of time.

**No! Rule Eight:**
The main character must solve her (or his) own problem.

Maxine gathered her courage. Then she plunged her sharp beak into the tip of the wolf's tender nose. The wolf howled in pain and ran off, never to be seen again. THE END.
It's not a good story. It's a great story. Now I'll revise it until it's perfect, then send it to a publisher.

Dear publisher,

I am sending you THE PERILS OF MAXINE -- a book about a chicken. I am well qualified to write this story because I am a chicken. I know how a chicken thinks and feels, and what a chicken likes to read.

Sincerely yours,

HENRIETTA

Henrietta

Many, many, many months later, the publisher sent a rejection letter.

Dear Ms. Henrietta,

We do not publish books written by chickens. Even if we did, we wouldn't want to. Don't quit your day job. Henrietta, Editor

The aunts were devastated, but Henrietta vowed not to brood over her rejection.
I'll make my own books.
When her books were finished, Henrietta gave one to the librarian.

"Your book should be reviewed," the librarian said. "Send it to The Corn Book."

So Henrietta mailed it off.

When The Corn Book review came out, it said:

Henrietta, The Perils of Maxine
One Dozen Pages; Cider Press

Henrietta lays an egg with her first book. We hope this is her last book. The Perils of Maxine shows why chickens shouldn't EVER write. It is odoriferous. —Noah Lyke

—Odoriferous means it stinks. End of story.
“I’m going to keep writing,” Henrietta said, but her feelings were hurt. And a little voice inside her kept saying...

Henrietta’s heart wasn’t into writing anymore. She even stopped going to the library. But her aunts missed hearing Henrietta read, so they begged her until she went to get some books.

Henrietta was embarrassed. Had the librarian seen that awful review?
THE PERI LS OF MAXINE
by Henrietta
Voted best book of the year by our story hour children.

The children love your book. Will you read it to them?

When Henrietta went into the story room, the children cheered. She read with dramatic expression. Of course, all the children heard was "BUK BUK BUK", but it didn’t matter. They knew the story by heart.
THE PERILS OF MAXINE

Once upon a time there was a hen named Maxine.
Maxine went walking alone in the woods, even though her mother told her it was dangerous.
Suddenly Maxine saw a wolf following her down the path. Maxine hid under a bush.
The wolf sniffed, “I smell a delicious young hen nearby.” He started creeping toward Maxine’s hiding place.

Maxine heard the wolf growl. As he came closer, she saw his sharp teeth and smelled his wolfy body odor.
When he was nearer still, she felt the heat of his icky breath. When he stuck his head through the leaves, Maxine tasted the bile rising from her gizzard.

Maxine gathered her courage. Then she plunged her sharp beak into the tip of the wolf’s tender nose. The wolf howled in pain and ran off, never to be seen again.

THE END.