How do I become a better writer in Spanish?

1. Get a **big dictionary** and use it slowly and carefully or use a quality website such as *wordreference.com*. Don't immediately choose the first answer when looking up a word. Make a choice after reading all the closest alternatives and then, if in doubt, look *that* word up in the Spanish-English side.

2. Write on a computer, double space, with a big dictionary and a grammar **reference book open** and **within reach** so you use them.

3. Look up any **idiomatic expressions** you put in your writing. These are so common in English that they sometimes slip by us when we're editing. Try to avoid them. Most don't translate word for word (such as the dreaded "tener un buen tiempo"). Expressions such as "it's all good" or "mark my words" are a linguistic "accidents waiting to happen."

4. **Edit slowly and carefully**.
Write a draft, let it sit for a little while and then go back over it looking for agreement issues and verb tense shifts. Too impatient to do this? It'll show. Ask yourself why you made the choices you made. Look at your diagnostic test. Are you repeating the same errors? (*a* vs. *en*, *por/para*, irregular preterit forms, etc). If you have issues with things like vocabulary or agreement you simply must spend time checking the endings of your nouns and verbs. There is no quick way around it and if it has been a while since you've studied Spanish or have a weak background you will spend lots of time doing this.

5. Look up **your professor's corrections** on everything you get back. Make a list of your errors and make an editing pass on your essays with those errors in mind. If you cannot remember *ser* and *estar*, type up and print out a list of the rules and post them next to your computer screen.

6. **Read** in Spanish. Read things you are interested in like sports, music, movie or TV reviews and the news. Whatever you read about in English is probably online in Spanish. While you're reading, pay attention to sentence structure and steal ideas, vocab and expressions. Start with something like espndeportes.com or bbcmundo.com and then move to sites hosted in the Spanish speaking world.

Once you get to this level, **you** need to take responsibility for shoring up your foundation in Spanish by actively editing your work.