

WRITING A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

PARENT TIPS

What is Personal Narrative Writing?

Personal narrative writing tells of a personal, memorable experience or event. The writing is based on the direct experience of the author. The purpose of this style of writing is to engage the reader in the author's own experience. To effectively accomplish this, the writer needs to incorporate appropriate action and dialogue, using lively vocabulary to “show”, not “tell” to relate the experience for the reader. Personal narratives should utilize the elements found in fictional story writing: an introduction (setting), events that lead to a climax (plot), and a resolution. For younger children, talk in terms of a beginning, middle and ending.

- The beginning includes background information to answer the reader's questions: Who? What? When? Where? and Why? Beginnings can be made more interesting by using an action, exclamation, thought or sound.
- The middle consists of elaborated important events arranged in chronological order.
- The ending or resolution reflects the author's feelings about the previous events described. Help the reader to feel satisfaction at having read a narrative by ending with a memory, feeling, hope or decision.

Examples of personal narratives

- journals
- biographies
- autobiographies
- newspaper reports or events
- histories
- letters
- diaries
- eyewitness accounts of incidents.

Textbook Support for Personal Narrative Writing

Each of our adopted texts contains an example of personal narrative writing, as well as supplemental practice book pages for Grades 2-6.

Houghton-Mifflin 2.2 Delights, page 152.

Houghton-Mifflin 3.1 Rewards, page 52

Houghton-Mifflin 4 Journeys, page 58

Houghton-Mifflin 5 Expeditions, page 364

Houghton-Mifflin 6 Triumphs, page 48

Prentice-Hall 7 Bronze, page 94

Prentice Hall 8 Silver, page 88

To summarize, the personal narrative essay

- is told from a particular point of view
- makes and supports a point
- is filled with precise detail
- uses vivid verbs and modifiers
- uses the same elements you'd find in a fictional narrative

STUDENT TIPS

PLAN!

What should I write about? Choose an event that you remember well, one that covers a brief period of time. Write about those last few minutes as the sun was setting behind the mountains near the lake where you were camping. Do not write about the entire two-week vacation. A two-week vacation could be a book! You're just writing a brief chapter!

What kind of event? Events that are attached to an emotion make for good personal narrative subjects. As you decide what to write about, ask yourself, "What is my point? Why am I writing about this?" The "why" makes the narrative interesting. Without a "why" all you are doing is retelling a happening.

Keep the ending in mind! Think about the relevance of the incident you plan to use—was there a lesson learned? Why do you remember it so well? Why is it significant? Did it give you a new insight or awareness about something? How could you convey its significance to your reader? By having your story support some generalization, moral, lesson, etc., it becomes more meaningful for the reader.

WRITE!

Use good organizational skills: beginning, middle, end.

REVISE/EDIT to MAKE IT BETTER!

Almost every sentence I wrote begins with "I". What should I do? Change your focus! Instead of "I saw the sun sinking behind the mountain", say "The sun slowly sank behind the mountain as I sat watching the last bit of its light slowly fade away."

How can I make my writing sound more interesting? Use action verbs instead of "verbs of being" (be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been). Don't say "I was tired." Instead, say "I rubbed my eyes as I tried to stifle another yawn." Show—don't tell! Paint a picture with your words: bright colored words, not gray foggy ones!

Use specific, concrete details rather than vague ones. Instead of saying "Jane was mad," show how you know Jane was mad. "Jane clenched her fist, trying to control the raging anger that threatened to erupt."

Lists of "other words for said" are popular. But.... sometimes "said" is the best word to use. Instead of letting the "tag" paint the picture, let the speaker's words do the job, or find appropriate modifiers to use with said.

"Stop!" screamed Jane. Or.....

"Stop!" Jane's voice rose as she stood paralyzed with fear, watching the approaching mountain lion.

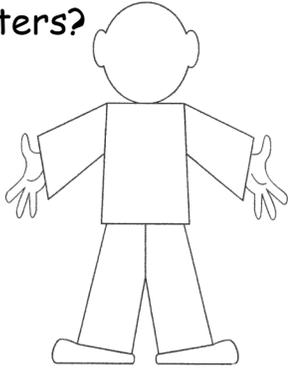
"Stop!" said Jane, her eyes warily following the mountain lion's movements.

IN A NUTSHELL!

**Tell about something you did. ● Remember: first, next, then...
Use descriptive language ● Proofread!**

Personal Narrative Map

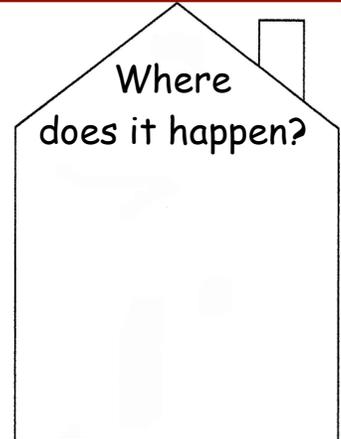
Who are the characters?



When does it happen?



Where does it happen?



What is the story about?

First...

Next...

Then...

Finally... (feeling or solution)



NARRATIVE WRITING SAMPLE RUBRIC

Name _____ Date _____

Assignment/Title _____

I think....

Parent/Teacher thinks...

☺ 4 3 2 1 ☹

Is it interesting to read?

☺ 4 3 2 1 ☹

Writing is easy to understand and follow. (*organization, idea*)

Detail is precise and rich.. (*word choice*)

Reader's attention is captured. (*idea, voice*)

Sentences show variety in length, beginning words, type and structure. (*fluency*)

An appropriate amount of information is given. (*idea*)

The text sounds good when read aloud. (*fluency*)

☺ 4 3 2 1 ☹

Is it easy to read and understand?

☺ 4 3 2 1 ☹

The writing clearly has a beginning, middle and end. (*organization*)

Conversation is appropriately punctuated and paragraphed. (*fluency, conventions*)

Appropriate transitional words and phrases enhance the paper's flow. (*organization*)

Sentences are grammatically and structurally correct: no run-ons or fragments. (*fluency, conventions*)

Paragraphs are structured: topic sentence, details, closing or bridge sentence. (*organization*)

Spelling, capitalization and punctuation are correct. (*conventions*)

☺ 4 3 2 1 ☹

Is the assignment complete?

☺ 4 3 2 1 ☹

The writing is of a narrative nature.

A graphic organizer or plan has been used and is attached.

A rough draft (attached) shows evidence of revision and editing.

The final draft is visually attractive and appropriate for the purpose of the assignment.

In complete sentences, use the vocabulary of this rubric to tell what you like about this piece of writing.

Tell what you will seek to improve in your next piece of writing.

Narrative Writing Web Resources

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/narrative.html>

This page represents a whole collection of pages—all that focus on narrative writing, both fictional and nonfiction. Some are lessons that are suited for classroom teaching, others link to handy-to-use workbook-type pages.

http://www.greatsource.com/iwrite/students/s_pers_narr.html

This page offers a concise summary of each of the steps in the writing process as they apply to personal narratives. Each step provides details that will help students progress through the process to arrive at a completed piece of personal narrative writing.

<http://www.iss.k12.nc.us/writing/personal.htm>

This site is divided into 9 parts, and includes everything from prompts to word lists to sample stories, all focused on narrative writing. The information is appropriate for middle/upper grade elementary students. You'll find brainstorming tips, samples of student work, even a great list of literature examples of personal narrative writing.

http://teacher.sduhsd.k12.ca.us/kburke/tips_for_writing_a_personal_narr.htm

Here you'll find some brief teaching tips to get students started with personal narratives. The material is simple and straightforward, easy to follow.

http://ptgmedia.pearsoncmg.com/imprint_downloads/merrill_professional/images/PersonalNarrativeTeachingStrategies.pdf

Don't click here unless you have a bit of time to spend!! It is a 7-page PDF file taken from a published book. It is extensive, and will provide more than enough to get your student writing personal narratives that he/she'll be happy with!

<http://learningtogive.org/lessons/unit485/lesson2.html>

This site provides a clearly organized lesson intended for use in a classroom period of 50 minutes. And... if you're inclined, there is a whole lot more than just writing. You might want to save the page for when you have some spare time!! It has a HUGE collection of lesson plans, all in one way or another focusing on the concept of giving—community service, etc.