

What is a Narrative Essay?

A narrative essay is a story that has a specific point. A narrative essay strives to teach a lesson. It is often written in 1st person – I or WE – because it is based on a personal story. Can also be written in 3rd person. In essays, the narrative writing could also be considered reflection or an exploration of the author's values told as a story.

1. Introduction: The Narrative Hook

Hooks help “set the stage” for the story. They make readers start guessing about what will happen next. The hook should make the reader ask questions about the essay. Start your paper with a statement about your story that catches the reader’s attention, for example: a relevant quotation, question, fact, or definition.

1. Introduction: Set the Scene

Provide the information the reader will need to understand the story: Who are the major characters? When and where is it taking place? Is it a story about something that happened to you, the writer, or is it fiction?

1. Introduction: Thesis Statement

A narrative thesis can begin the events of the story: “It was sunny and warm out when I started down the path”; offer a moral or lesson learned: “I’ll never hike alone again”; or identify a theme that connects the story to a universal experience: “Journeys bring both joy and hardship.”

2. Body: “Show, Don’t Tell”

Good story telling includes details and descriptions that help the reader understand what the writer experienced. Think about using all five senses—not just the sense of sight—to add details about what you heard, saw, and felt during the event. For example, *“My heart jumped as the dark shape of the brown grizzly lurched toward me out of the woods”* provides more information about what the writer saw and felt than, *“I saw a bear when I was hiking”*.

2. Body: Supporting Evidence

In a personal narrative, your experience acts as the evidence that proves your thesis. The events of the story should demonstrate the lesson learned, or the significance of the event to you.

2. Body: Passage of Time

Writing about the events of your experience using time chronologically, from beginning to end, is the most common and clear way to tell a story. Whether you choose to write chronologically or not, use transition words to clearly indicate to the reader what happened **first, next, and last**. Some time transition words are next, finally, during, after, when, and later.

2. Body: Transitions

In a narrative essay, a new paragraph marks a change in the action of a story, or a move from action to reflection. Paragraphs should connect to one another. For example, the end of one paragraph might be: “I turned and ran, hoping the bear hadn’t noticed me”, and the start of the next might be: “There are many strategies for surviving an encounter with a bear; ‘turn and run’ is not one of them.”

2. Body: Outline

A. Details about the *beginning* of the event or experience

1. Specific supporting ideas, details and examples
2. Sensory and descriptive details

B. Details about what occurred *during* the event or experience

1. Specific supporting ideas, details and examples
2. Sensory and descriptive details

C. Details about what happened in the *final* stage of the event or personal experience

1. Specific supporting ideas, details and examples
2. Sensory and descriptive details

3. Conclusion: The Moral of the Story

The conclusion of a narrative include the closing action of the event, but also should include some reflection or analysis of the significance of the event to the writer. What lesson did you learn? How has what happened to you affected your life now?

Topics

A childhood event: Think of an experience when you learned something for the first time, or when you realized how important someone was for you.

A failure: Think about a time when you did not perform as well as you had wanted. Focusing on an experience like this can result in rewarding reflections about the positive emerging from the negative.

Topics

A change in your life: Think about a time when something significant changed in your life. This could be anything from a move across town to a major change in a relationship to the birth or death of a loved one.

Descriptive Essay

A description essay appeals to the reader's five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. It paints a vivid picture with words. The writer's purpose is to describe people, places, or objects as detailed as possible so that the readers are able to form a clear picture in their minds.

What do you want to describe?

A person

A place

A memory

An experience

An object

Introduction / Lead-in

- ✓ To gain the reader's attention
Introduce the person or place to be described in an interesting way.
This will serve as the **HOOK** of your essay .
- ✓ Explain how you get to know this person or place.

Introduction / Thesis Statement

- ✓ **After stating your topic of description, decide on what kind of dominant impression you want to convey with your description.**
- ✓ **Remember that dominant impression should be supported in all the parts of your essay.**

Topic



**Dominant
Impression**

**Thesis
Statement**

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Body: Descriptive Details

1. Replace being **verbs** (am, be, been, is, was, were) with descriptive action words to improve a description essay.

Vague: Leo is having a conversation with Elizabeth.

Improved: Leo whispers secrets into Elizabeth's ear.

Vague: The music is loud throughout the apartment.

Improved: The music blares throughout the apartment.

Body: Descriptive Details

2. Replace boring verbs with **action verbs** to further enrich the description in the essay.

Vague: The salesman looked at Erika when she opened the door.

Improved: The salesman stared at Erika when she opened the door.

Vague: Paul's hungry date ate the pastry.

Improved: Paul's hungry date devoured the pastry.

Body: Descriptive Details

3. **Avoid vague nouns**, such as thing, stuff, and item.

Vague: Honesty is a thing that I admire.

Improved: Honesty is a trait that I admire.

Vague: Henry gave the stuff to his brother.

Improved: Henry gave the bag of books to his brother

Body : Outline

Body Paragraph 1

1. **Topic Sentence:** Introduce the first feature.
2. **Supporting Details:** Use descriptive details.
3. **Closing Remarks:** Summarize this paragraph.

Body Paragraph 2

1. **Topic Sentence:** Introduce the second feature.
2. **Supporting Details:** Use descriptive details.
3. **Closing Remarks:** Summarize this paragraph.

Body Paragraph 3

1. **Topic Sentence:** Introduce the third feature.
2. **Supporting Details:** Use descriptive details.
3. **Closing Remarks:** Summarize this paragraph

Conclusion

- 1. Rephrase the thesis sentence.**
- 2. Restate the three features.**
- 3. Extend the significance of the description.**