

## Tips on Writing a Narrative Essay

In a narrative essay, the writer tells a story about a real-life experience. Everyone enjoys a good story—especially one that captures the imagination. However, the narrative essay goes further. In it, the writer places a personal experience within the context of a larger theme, such as a lesson learned. When writing a narrative essay, the writer wants not only to tell a good story, but also convey why the story has meaning.

### **The Five-Step Writing Process for Narrative Essays**

At Time4Learning, we are great believers in the writing process. The writing process empowers students to write with better results by giving them proven steps to follow. Here, we examine how to write a narrative essay using the five-step writing process. Students should find these suggestions helpful:

#### **1. Prewriting for the Narrative Essay**

The prewriting phase in narrative essay writing is particularly important. In the prewriting phase, students think about their life experiences in the context of the assignment's theme, for example 'write about achieving a goal.' When selecting an experience to write about, keep in mind that even a small incident (or goal, in this case) can make a good essay topic if it has significance for the writer. If writers feel an emotional connection to their topic, their narrative essay will be more effective.

Once a topic is chosen, students should spend time sorting through their memories, and recalling details, including the year, season, setting, people, and objects involved. Think about the sequence of events and remember, no detail is too small. Often it's the small details that communicate big ideas. Creating an outline of the story's narrative flow is very helpful.

#### **2. Drafting a Narrative Essay**

When creating the initial draft of a narrative essay, follow the outline, but focus on making the story come alive, using the following techniques:

- Personal narrative essays are most naturally written in the first person, and using "I" gives the story an immediacy that engages the reader.
- In telling the story, don't gloss over the details. Readers have no prior knowledge of the story, and many times a skipped detail will skew their understanding.
- Use vivid descriptions and words that illustrate. In narrative writing, the writer's job is to involve the reader, rather than simply inform. Take a look at this sentence: "Losing the game felt like the bottom of my world dropped out." It conveys so much more about the significance

of the writer's experience than simply saying, "I was disappointed that we lost the game."

- While narrative essays are non-fiction, elements of fiction should not be ignored. True stories also benefit from the writer's ability to use plot-building techniques.

### **3. Revising a Narrative Essay**

In the revision phase, students review, modify, and reorganize their work with the goal of making it the best it can be. In revising a narrative essay, students should reread their work with these considerations in mind:

- Does the essay unfold in an easy-to-understand progression of events? Do the transitions make sense or confuse the reader?
- Does the essay involve the reader in the experience? Could there be more detail, or is there extraneous detail that distracts the reader's attention?
- Is the word choice descriptive, or merely informative?
- Has the larger message of the essay been conveyed effectively? Has a connection been made between the experience and its meaning to the writer? Will the reader be able to identify with the conclusion made?

In structuring a narrative essay, it's the writer's choice when to reveal the significance of the experience. Some writers make this connection to theme in the opening paragraph. Others like to focus on the experience and reveal its significance at the end. Writers should experiment which way works best for the essay. Clueing in the reader upfront helps their understanding, but saving the revelation to the end can leave the reader with more to think about.

### **4. Editing a Narrative Essay**

At this point in the writing process, writers proofread and correct errors in grammar and mechanics, and edit to improve style and clarity. Having a friend read the essay is a good idea at this point, and allows the writer to see their work from a fresh perspective.

### **5. Publishing a Narrative Essay**

Due to its personal nature, sharing a narrative essay with the rest of the class can be both exciting and a bit scary. Remember, there isn't a writer on earth who isn't sensitive about his or her own work. The important thing is to learn from the experience and use the feedback to make the next essay even better.

**Time4Writing Teaches Narrative Essay Writing**  
**Time4Writing essay writing courses** offer a highly effective way to learn how to write the types of essays required for school, standardized tests, and

college applications. A unique online writing program for elementary, middle school, and high school students, **Time4Writing** breaks down the writing process into manageable chunks, easily digested by young writers. Students steadily build writing skills and confidence, guided by one-on-one instruction with a dedicated, certified teacher. Our middle school **Welcome to the Essay** and **Advanced Essay** courses teach students the fundamentals of writing well-constructed essays, including the narrative essay. The high school **Exciting Essay Writing** course focuses in depth on the essay writing process with the goal of preparation for college. The courses also cover how to interpret essay writing prompts in testing situations. **[Read what parents are saying about their children's writing progress in Time4Writing courses.](#)**