

Write a Narrative

Getting the Idea

Key Words

narrative
narrator
sensory
details
dialogue
transition
words
temporal
words

The purpose of **narrative** writing is to tell a story that entertains readers. Some narratives are fictional, while others tell true stories, but all narratives have characters, a setting, a plot, and a point of view.

The characters perform the action in your narrative; think about what you want them to be like. The setting is the time and location. The plot is the series of events, centered around the conflict, or problem, the characters face. It leads toward the resolution of the conflict in the conclusion.

The **narrator** is the person who tells the story, and point of view refers to who that narrator is. The point of view affects how readers experience the story. A narrator using the first-person point of view (using the word *I*) is a character in the story. A third-person narrator (using *he*, *she*, or *they*) does not take part in the events and may share the thoughts of one character or all the characters.

Writing a Narrative

Step 1: Prewriting When you plan a narrative, think about your task, purpose, and audience. What kind of story do you want to write, and for whom? Decide whether you want to write about things that actually happened, or about made-up characters and events. Begin brainstorming ideas by asking yourself such questions as: "Who are the main characters? What are they like? Where and when does the story take place? What problem will the characters face?"

Read the chart below. Complete the chart with a possible resolution.

Character(s) Britney, her dad, Britney's friends	Setting(s) pizza restaurant, dad's car, a park
Problem Britney feels guilty because she's disappointed about celebrating her birthday by just eating pizza with her dad. Meanwhile, Britney's dad can't wait to finish their pizza and take Britney to a surprise party at the park!	
Resolution of the Problem	

Step 2: Planning To organize the narrative, use a story map to outline the sequence of events. Look at the ideas you brainstormed, and decide how the characters will work through the problem in the story.

Look at the story map below. Think of an idea for the third event that will help this plot develop. Then write an idea for the conclusion of the story. The conclusion should follow the events of the story and show how the problem is resolved or how the characters change.

<p>Beginning: Event 1 On Britney's birthday, Britney and her dad eat pizza at their favorite pizza place. Britney feels guilty because she wishes she were celebrating with her friends.</p>
<p>Middle: Event 2 After pizza, they drive home. Britney thanks her dad for the special meal but privately feels disappointed. Britney's dad says he has to make one more stop.</p> <p>Event 3</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>

Step 3: Drafting Next, write a draft of the narrative. To draw readers into your story and keep them engaged, include **sensory details** to tell how things sound, look, feel, and smell. Use concrete and precise words to give readers a clear picture of what is happening. Develop the story by using **dialogue**—conversation between characters. Dialogue is a good way to show how your characters respond to situations. Also, pay attention to the pacing of your events. You can slow down a story by using long, descriptive sentences. You can speed up a story by using short, action-packed sentences.

Step 4: Revising Read through your draft, looking for places where readers might get confused about what is happening and why. To show connections between events and ideas, add **transition words** and phrases such as *and*, *yet*, *besides*, and *in addition to*. To make the order of events clear and to show time passing, add **temporal words** and phrases such as *first*, *then*, *at last*, or *after that*. Look for places to add more dialogue or description. Replace words that are unclear or used too often.

Model Text

The short story below is an example of a narrative. Read the story and the side notes to learn how the writer of this story followed the rules of narrative writing.

Nature, Up Close

Beginning Sensory details immediately draw readers into the story.



The soft splash of our oars slicing through water was the only sound. I caught Mom's eye, and we smiled as our kayaks glided in unison across the glasslike surface.

Point of view The story has first-person narration. The narrator uses the word *I* and experiences the story events.



"Almost there!" Dad encouraged. I could just begin to make out the rocks along the shore.

Dialogue The conversation between the characters heightens the suspense.



"Shhh," shushed Mom suddenly. And even in that small utterance, I heard a thread of fear.

Transition and temporal words The word *but* signals a contrast and links ideas. The words *At the last . . . second* and *then* show order and time.



"What is—" I broke off and stared in awe as the massive brown hulk of a moose suddenly stepped forward out of the pine branches and bent his immense head down for a drink of water not three feet from us.

Concrete words Instead of *walked*, the writer uses *sauntered*. This specific word conveys the event precisely.



No one spoke. I tried to back-paddle to stop our approach, but I couldn't stop the boat from heading straight for him.

Conclusion The conclusion reflects the significance of the experience. Readers find out the effect it had on the narrator.



At the last terrifying second, the moose raised his head and stared right at us . . . and then snorted softly, turned around, and sauntered away.

This amazing animal had moved the heft of his colossal body with quick and easy grace, showing little care for our presence. But we still talk about the way our heartbeats drummed in our ears at the sight of him.

Coached Example

Grace is instructed to write a four-paragraph narrative. She decides to write a story about a boy who has to pay close attention during a challenging hike.

- 1 Grace wants to describe the setting and introduce the narrator and plot in the first paragraph. Rewrite the paragraph to include engaging sensory details.

Otto looked down. There were other people in the distance. They must have made it down the rock. He took a breath. This was the only path forward.

Hint Imagine yourself in the setting, and then describe precisely what you see, feel, and hear to immerse your readers in the sensory details.

- 2 Grace writes dialogue to move the story forward. Read the paragraphs below. Add dialogue to continue the conversation. Have Otto's mom give him direction about how to go down. Use dialogue to show how Otto feels.

"Wait!" Otto's mom called out.
Otto froze. "What is it?" he asked, petrified.

Hint When developing the plot, use dialogue to show the character's tone and feelings.

- 3 Which point of view is used in Grace's narrative?
- A. third person, from Otto's perspective
 - B. first person, from Otto's perspective
 - C. third person, from the mom's perspective
 - D. first person, from the mom's perspective

Hint Does the narrator use *I* and *my* or *he*, *she*, and *they*?

4

How might Grace conclude her story? Fill in the story map with a possible conclusion.

Beginning: Otto recognizes that the only way to continue is to scramble down a steep rock face.



Middle: Otto's mom encourages him and tells him how to safely climb down the rock.



Conclusion:

Hint: Make sure the conclusion follows the events that lead up to it and resolves the conflict, or problem.

5

Using the story map in question 4 above, write a concluding paragraph for the story. Use third-person narration, explaining the events as Otto's mom sees them.

Handwriting lines for writing a concluding paragraph.

Hint: When you use a third-person narrator, you can include the feelings and thoughts of another character to bring more interest to the story. Think about how Otto's mom might feel as she watches him climb down the rock.



Practice 1

Develop a plan for a short personal narrative about a time you experienced something amazing or surprising.

1 Brainstorm some ideas.

Characters: Me and

Setting: _____

Surprising/amazing experience: _____

2 Where were you when this event happened? Who was with you? Fill in the story map with ideas and events to outline your story.

Beginning: Where did the event happen? Who was involved?



Middle: What happened? How did I respond?



Conclusion: What was the outcome of the experience?

Describe the experience.

E Write one paragraph about the time you experienced something amazing or surprising. Look at the ideas and events you wrote in the chart for the middle of the narrative. As you describe the situation and events, use dialogue to bring the characters to life. Include transition and temporal words to give readers a sense of the time passing and to help readers follow the plot.

Z Reread what you wrote to make sure that it is clear and engaging. Make any revisions you need to clarify and correct your writing, such as adding sensory details and replacing general words with precise words. Correct any errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation.