

How to write a narrative essay: format, features, examples

[Education](#)



What is a narrative essay?

Once Scott Turow, a novelist and former U. S. Attorney said: “ Narrative is about understanding what it is like to have the life of someone else, and it is enormously important because our moral intelligence is developed that way.” Can you guess the essay definition?

Let’s find out what exactly includes a narrative essay. A narrative paper is a writing assignment which involves telling a story of student’s life that has a connection with class themes. This kind of task can be assigned both to school and college students. A narrative essay challenges creative skills of the writer. A student has to provide an inventive, extraordinary, and sometimes provocative writing narration describing important life-situations.

Narrative essay format

Let’s speak about essay structure. The goal of a narration essay is to tell a story. It could relate to personal experience and highlight your beliefs, feelings, fears, thoughts or present emotionless, accurate, objective narrative of a historical event or scientific experiment. Traditionally, narration essays can be written in first person (“ I”) or third person (“ they”). As a writer, it’s up to you to define narrative and choose whether you are the main character relating everything from your point of view or a precise reporter of events. While writing a narrative essay, you shouldn’t forget about one of the essential components of the successful writing - the outline. It is considered as the frame of the piece.

Effective academic narrative writing has four important features:

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1. A clear and narrow focus. Stories in academic writing regularly do not cover long, complicated plots. Narrative essays commonly follow a very specific purpose, and stories are presented in a way that fulfills that purpose.
2. Concision. A powerful narrative essay is brief and narrowly focused. Depending on the rhetorical situation and subject matter, narratives in academic writing will differ a great deal in length and style, but the general rule of thumb is to keep it short.
3. A basic structure. Narrative essays traditionally support a basic, chronological composition and rarely manifest the more complex structures of many conventional narratives. Academic writers structure their narratives to help readers easily understand the subject of the story.
4. Short, purposeful description. Description in narrative essays, as a rule, is designed to convey a point quickly and clearly. Academic writers use language efficiently and rarely rely on complex diction in describing a person, scene, event or thing.

Typically, a good narrative essay is based on introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion. Put the topic at the very beginning of the essay. It is especially important for college students. As well as a researched argument essay should contain a thesis statement somewhere in the first paragraph of the essay, a narrative essay needs a theme statement to explain the main idea of the story. The second paragraph of the narrative essay is the body paragraph. If the essay is told in the first person and presents an experience of the writer, it is crucial to put in time order the words that show sequencing

of details. Begin the body of the essay with the first event you want to share. Then continue in chronological order. Do not be afraid to use words as: “after a few days, later on, finally,” these will help the reader to get in exactly what order the actions in the paragraph are taking place.

You can use some strategies for manipulating time in a narrative to create tension, heighten the drama, and emphasize specific events or moments in the story. Here are some prompts. For example:

- You may slow the story down. Even the most rigidly chronological narrative cannot cover everything that happened in a story, nor can it tell a story in real time. So writers move swiftly over less essential parts of their stories and focus on the more notable moments or events.
- Another popular narrative method is the flashback, in which the writer interrupts the story to revert to something that happened earlier. Usually, flashbacks contribute valuable background information or context.
- And, of course, in medias res, which is Latin for “in the middle of things,” is a standard technique for performing tension or drama and fascinating readers into the story. In this technique, the writer introduces the story at a point just before the climactic moment but stops the story before approaching that moment to return to a point earlier.

Add your thoughts and feelings as you write your sentences. While composing an essay, make sure that your detail sentences refer to the main

idea. The final paragraph of the narrative essay sums up the entire story, by rephrasing the main topic. It is a conclusion part. Also, do not forget about the audience you are addressing to. Think about the amount of background information or definitions you need to supply so readers can appreciate the significance of your narrative. It should be mentioned that you aim to present such information that will attract readers and invoke them to read the text up to the end. It is the right way to gain success. Moreover, use simple language to avoid misunderstandings.

Narrative essay example

Here you can read the example college essay. Hope you will enjoy.

My Worst Summer Job

When I got a summer intern job working for a local magazine called "Bon Soir," I could not believe my luck. I had just graduated from high school and had sent in a CV almost as a joke. But the assistant of the chief-editor called me, and soon I was working for a favorite columnist of my mom. I thought this would help me to find myself, and to improve my writing skills. I always wanted to become a writer, so this opportunity was priceless. When I got a call, I agreed to work, but wasn't sure what exactly I was assigned to. I started thinking about it, but I was too coward to call again to the office. So, I decided to think positively.

I imagined myself as a true detective investigating corruption schemes, scandals and usage of fake banknotes side by side with my co-worker let's call him "a favorite columnist of my mother." My mother also was exciting.

The reality was very different. The very first day of my new job made me

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sick of coffee and burgers for the rest of my life. My principal function in “Bon Soir” was serving coffee and burgers to the workers. And you know what, journalists, and especially my mom’s idol adore coffee and burgers.

There was a small kitchen in the office. I spent there the whole month. Their appetite was enormous. Dozens of coffee cups and sandwiches delivered personally to every office-worker. I was exhausted. And finally, came the day when I got fired. It happened due to my mom’s favorite columnist. That man didn’t get his sandwich in time, just because I had too many orders, so he fired me. And you know what, I was happy.

Despite the fact, that the job wasn’t successful, I was ready to learn such a lesson. Do not rush when making a decision. Think twice, trice, but think about it. I didn’t, and I had got the worse summer job ever.

Narrative essay topics

A story and some analysis of the story is the fundamental basis of narrative essays. That is why the writer should choose a story which reflects a particular issue, conflict, theme, or concept. Here we have several samples of topics and essay ideas perfectly suited to the requirements of a narrative essay:

1. An experience revealing loyalty
2. An experience revealing courage
3. An experience revealing generosity
4. Your best holiday
5. Your worst holiday
6. Your first day in school

7. Your first day in job
8. Your worst accident
9. An unforgettable childhood experience.
10. The first time you spent the night away from home.
11. The first time you traveled abroad.
12. A situation when you gained self-confidence
13. Your participation in a charity campaign showing how you have changed
14. A meaningful event experienced in another culture or country
15. A victory over prejudice
16. A victory over anger
17. A victory over violence
18. A family story (perhaps one about you- for example, how did you get your name?)
19. The hardest task you have accomplished
20. A habit that got you into or out of the trouble
21. A non-academic lesson you have learned
22. The most frightening event you've ever experienced
23. A gain or loss of something or someone important
24. A risk that paid off (or a victory against the odds)
25. An episode reflecting your passage from one stage of your life to another
26. The worst conflict situation you have experienced
27. Your first job
28. The saddest disappointment

29. The happiest event of your life
30. The saddest event of your life

Hope we provided you with enough information. Try to use the above-discussed tips, and you will definitely write a perfect narrative essay. Take care