

ELEMENTS OF NARRATION

I will never forget the time I got lost in the medina when I was five years old. My mother and aunt were looking at clothing piled up on several long tables. After a few moments I lost interest in the clothing and wandered toward a display of shiny silver jewelry. I turned to ask my mother if she would buy me a bracelet, but she wasn't there. For a moment I felt that I could not even breathe, and the sound of my heart seemed to be pounding in my ears. Then I began crying and screaming at the top of my lungs. Within seconds, several adults tried to comfort me. "Don't worry", an old man kept repeating. Your mother will find you soon." Looking back on this incident, I am sure he meant well, but at the time, he only frightened me because he had an untrimmed beard, hardly any teeth, and smelled strongly of tobacco. Suddenly, my mother pushed through the crowd and I stopped sobbing. I will never forget the relief I felt when her strong arms pulled me to her even though she said, "why didn't you stay with us? Don't do that again!"

The crash of a Brinks truck on a Miami overpass still raises disturbing questions. January 8, 1997, was just another crowded, rude, and crazy day in Miami traffic until an armored Brinks truck flipped and broke open, sending nearly a million dollars in cash swirling over the highway. Hundreds of motorists screeched to a stop, grabbing whatever money they could. People in nearby houses raced outside, shouting and scooping up bills. When it was over, a tiny handful of people returned some money. Firefighter Manny Rodriguez turned in a huge bale of bills worth \$330,000, and one teenager returned some quarters. However, nearly half a million dollars was missing—stolen by everyday people like you and me. In the following days, some rationalized the mass theft as a kind of Robin Hood action because the truck had crashed in a poor area of town. Most people claimed to be shocked. Now we are all left with hard questions: *Why did a few people "do the right thing"? Why did the majority do the "wrong thing"? What causes people to act virtuously, even if no one is watching? What would you or I have done?*

CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATION

1. Look at the topic sentence. If the paragraph has one, underline it
 - a. What does the topic sentence make you expect
 - b. Does the paragraph fulfill the expectations raised by the topic sentence
 - c. If the topic sentence is weak or missing, write a good one
 2. Has the writer selected the best point of you? why?
 3. Is the paragraph well developed with details?
 - a. Underline details that you find effective
 - b. If there are not enough details, add more
 4. Is the paragraph unified?
- If your answer is no, underline any sentences that do not support the topic idea
5. Coherence: are all the supporting sentences in direct chronological order?
 - a. Are verb tenses consistent? Draw a circle around any verbs that jump without reason between past, present, and future
 - b. List important words that are directly repeated
 - c. List any important words, which are not indirectly repeated.
 - d. Draw a circle around any pronouns
 - e. Underline any transitional expressions. Here are some of them:

After	Later
Afterward, afterwards	Meanwhile
As	Next
At the same time	Now
Before	Presently
Briefly	Recently
By that time	Simultaneously
Currently	So far
During	Sometime, sometimes
Earlier	Soon
Eventually	Still
Finally	Suddenly
First.second...	Then
For (five minutes,etc...)	Until
Immediately	When
In the meantime	Whenever
Last	while

6. If there is a dialogue, is it correctly punctuated?
7. If the paragraph has a concluding sentence, does it provide a feeling of closure?

CHECK LIST FOR WRITING

1. Narrow the topic
2. Compose a topic sentence that tells the point of the story
3. Free write or brainstorm for all the events and details
4. Select the most important events and details
5. Make a plan or an outline: number the events in the correct time sequence
6. Write a draft, using transitional expressions
7. Revise: unity, logic, coherence
8. Proofread

Narrative Paragraph

A narrative paragraph presents a connected series of events, either imaginary or based on your own experience, in a vivid descriptive style. It may be written in the first person (I /we) or third person (she/he, etc.), and often includes the thoughts, reactions ; etc. of the main character(s) describing the action as it would be seen through their eyes.

A good narrative should consist of

- (a) **a topic sentence** which sets the scene (place, time, character(s), etc.), creates an interesting mood /atmosphere to make the reader want to continue reading, and /or begins dramatically to capture the reader 's attention.
- (b) **Supporting sentences** which develop series of events clearly, give a vivid description of the people, places, involved etc. ;and
- (c) **A concluding sentence** which completes the story. Although some narrative paragraphs do not contain a concluding sentence , many end with a restatement , an insight or a lesson.

Points to consider

- Before you start writing, you must first think of a suitable story outline, then you should decide on a detailed plot, including how the story will begin, who the characters will be, where the story will happen , the events in the order you will present them, and how the story will end.
 - After you have found a story to tell, and decide about the best point of view from which you can narrate, your next decision is to select your character(s). Since characters have real feelings, needs , pleasures and fears, these details make the story more real and exciting for the reader. Sometimes a writer can help reveal characters by providing sensory details. For example, if you want to write about helping your uncle work in the garden when you were very young, you might include such sensory details as the heaviness of the bucket of water you carried, how you used to spill some of the water, making mud that you later walked in, or how your uncle looked and sounded.
 - Dialogue , using a character's actual words, does not appear in every narrative paragraph, but when it does appear, it brings the story alive for the reader.

If you write a dialogue, use quotation marks to enclose the direct speech of a character.

Example1 : Omar said, " I hope you can lend me fifty dirhams."

Example2 : "I hope you can lend me fifty dirhams", said Omar.

- Part of the art of narration is knowing what events to select, i.e., what events the writer chooses in her/his narrative.

-Also, how is a character described ? Make a list of all of the physical particulars we are given about this character. How, other than direct description, is this character revealed to the reader ?

-The purpose of a narrative paragraph is to tell about something that happened. A narrative paragraph must have a topic sentence, details about the event, and time order. The author brings the incident to life so that the reader could share the experience. It should be written in logical order. It describes what a person does over a period of time.

- Narratives are normally set in the past, and therefore use a variety of past tenses. For example, Past continuous is often used to set the scene (e.g., She has set out in the morning, full of hope, but now she felt.....)

The sequence of events is important; therefore, you must use time words such as: before, after, then, in the beginning, later, in the end, until, while, during, finally, etc.

I. Read the story below and complete the tasks that follow :

I will never forget the time I got lost in the medina when I was five years old. My mother and I were looking at clothing piled up on several long tables. After a few moments I lost interest in the clothing and wandered toward a display of shiny silver jewelry. I turned to ask my mother if she would buy me a bracelet, but she wasn't there. For a moment I felt that I couldn't even breathe, and the sound of my heart seemed to be pounding in my ears. Then I began crying and screaming at the top of my lungs. Within seconds, several adults tried to comfort me. "don't worry", an old man kept repeating. "Your mother will find you soon". Looking back on this incident, I am sure that he meant well, but at the time, he only frightened me because he had an untrimmed beard, hardly any teeth, and smelled strongly of tobacco. Suddenly my mother pushed through the crowd, and I stopped sobbing. I will never forget the relief I felt when her strong arms pulled me to her even though she said, " why didn't you stay with us ? Don't do that again."

1. a. Look for the **topic sentence**. If the paragraph has a topic sentence, underline it.

b. What does the topic sentence make you expect ? _____

c. Does the paragraph fulfill the expectations raised by the topic sentence ? _____

d. If the topic sentence is weak or missing, write a good one : _____

2. Has the writer selected the best point of view ? Why ? _____

3. a. Is your paragraph **well developed** with details ?

b. Underline the details that you find effective. _____

c. if there are not enough details, add some :

4. a. Is the paragraph **unified** ? _____

b. If you answered *no*, underline any sentences that do not support the topic idea.

5. **Coherence** : a. Are all the supporting sentences in direct chronological order ? _____

b. Are verb tenses consistent ? _____ Draw a circle around any very verbs that jump without reason between past, present and future.

c. List important words that are directly repeated : _____

d. List important words which are indirectly repeated.

e. Draw a circle around any pronouns.

f. Underline any transitional expressions.

6. a. if there is **dialogue**, is it realistic ? _____

b. If there is dialogue, is it correctly punctuated ? _____

c. If you answered *no*, write in the correct punctuation.

7. a. if the paragraph has a **concluding sentence**, is it a restatement or insight/lesson ? _____

b. If the paragraph does not have a concluding sentence, does it provide a feeling of closure anyway ? _____

NARRATIVE PARAGRAPHS

Techniques for beginnings or ending stories:

- A good beginning is as important as a good ending. A good beginning should make your reader want to go on with your story. A good beginning will make your reader feel satisfied.

You can start your story by :

- a) Describing the weather, place, people, etc, Using the senses.
- b) Using direct speech
- c) Asking a rhetorical question
- d) Creating mystery or suspense.
- e) Referring to feelings or moods.
- f) Addressing the reader directly.

You can end your story by:

- a) Using direct speech
- b) Referring to feelings or moods.
- c) Describing people's reactions events developed in the main body
- d) Creating mystery or suspense.
- e) Asking a rhetorical question.

+Note that more than one technique can be used in the beginning or ending of a story.

Exercise 1: Read the following beginnings and endings, then say which techniques have been used in each paragraph.

BEGINNINGS...

1. Brightly colored fish swam among the coral, and ribbons of seaweed reached upward to the sunlight on the surface of the sea. I gazed with happiness and wonder at the underwater world around me. Then a sudden movement caught my eye and I turned to see a huge, sleek shape hurtling toward me.
2. "Don't move!" a voice hissed. Steven froze, peering at the shape of a thin figure in a long coat, standing in the shadows. A dustbin clattered in the alley outside, and the figure turned sharply, dim light glinting off the barrel of a gun. Steven launched himself at the figure, as the flash and crack of a gunshot filled the bare concrete room.
3. Have you ever had one of those days when everything goes wrong? When your alarm clock doesn't ring, and you race out of the house in a panic, desperately putting on your jacket only to find that the car won't start and the bus drivers are on strike? Let me assure you that such inconveniences pale into insignificance beside the catastrophes I endured yesterday.

...ENDINGS

1. After such terrible day, I was happier than ever to reach the safety of my home. As I poured myself a strong coffee, I closed my eyes for a moment and asked myself, "why did this have to happen to me?"
2. When I awoke, I was lying in a hospital bed with medical staff peering down at me. I felt exhausted but relieved and all I really remember was one of the doctors saying, "You are lucky to be alive."

3. The sunlight hurt his eye as he reached the end of the tunnel. He stopped, listened, and breathed a sigh of relief when there was no sound of footsteps behind him. Then, as he crept out of the tunnel, a figure stepped forward to bar his way: a thin figure in a long coat, laughing softly.

Exercise 2

A- Put the events in a chronological order.

- I reached for my glasses, and then remembered I'd left them at home. I couldn't see the object clearly.
- He said he didn't see a thing.
- The lifeguard looked through his binoculars.
- I ran as far as I could to get the lifeguard.
- I bought a newspaper. There was an article about dolphins swimming near the shore.
- I was pretty embarrassed .
- I was taking a walk on the beach and stopped to look at the waves.
- I thought I saw something struggling in the water.
- I read the article. I realized that I had seen a dolphin in the water – not a man!
- It looked like a man who was having trouble with swimming.
- I never went anywhere without my glasses again.
- We arrived back at the spot where I had seen the man.
- A big wave came, and the man was gone.

B- Use these adverbs where appropriate to combine the sentences in Exercise A. Put them in paragraph form, and then compare with a partner.

After that	At that moment	the next day	suddenly
As soon as	just then	one day	when

Connectors and Time relationship Words in Narratives

The most common way to organise time in a narrative paragraph is in chronological order. The action that occurs first in the topic sentence, and the actions that follow are in the next sentences (the body) and continue to the end (the conclusion).

To make sure that readers understand time relationships, effective writers of narrative paragraphs use connecting words and phrases to show how events progress. Examples of these are:

Chronological Order

-First
-next
-finally
-later
-now
-then

Prepositions

after (a moment)
at (9:00 A.M)
by (bedtime, then)
during (the afternoon)
until (five o'clock)

Time Words that Begin Clauses

after
as soon as
before
(four weeks) later
from then on
when
while
whenever

until

Evaluating A Narrative Paragraph

My trip to Italy proved to me that the first case of homesickness is usually the worse. For example, getting lost on my first night away from home made me homesick right away. I drove my rented car around the crowded streets of Rome but could not find the hotel. After half an hour of driving, I saw the hotel's name at the top of the building, but I took another fifteen minutes before arriving at the entrance. The hard, lumpy bed plus the noise from the hotel's nightclub kept me awake and thinking about home. A second experience with strangers made me even more homesick. Since I knew some basic Spanish, I attempted to speak Italian but was not understood. One morning at a local bakery I was pushed around by a shopkeeper who hurried me when I finally ordered, and then he shortchanged me. Another adventure in the Italian countryside made me even more lonesome for home. I got a flat tire one day, and night came before I could get to my hotel in the city fifty miles away. So I fell asleep in my car. The police found me and led me to the closest place to stay, a small town with only one old, run-down inn for travelers. I never appreciated how much home meant to me until the first time I left it.

Give the information about the preceding paragraph .

UNITY- General Statement/topic sentence-----

Example 1:-----

Concrete details: -----

Example 2; -----

Example 3: -----

Concrete details-----

ORDER of examples (check orders used):

-----time ----- climatic ----- general to particular ----- alternating.

COHERENCE

Transitions-----

Repeated key terms/ synonyms-----

EMPHASIS (Check method used)

-----direct statement ----- position ----- proportion -----

Narrative Outline

What Is a Narrative Outline?

It is a skeleton of your narrative paragraph, which produces information on the main ideas stated in the outline. In other words, a narrative outline is a guide for the writing process. Outline covers every single part of your narrative essay, including the introduction and thesis statement, body parts of your writing, and the concluding idea.

Purpose of a Narrative Outline

Purpose of the narrative outline is two-fold:

From the one hand, a narrative outline helps you follow the preset guidelines. The formal formatting is necessary to help you organize the ideas, add relevant thoughts into the paper, and generate conclusions. From the other hand, a narrative outline is your search guide as it helps you direct the specifics of your research. In particular, when you have a list of ideas you want to uncover in the process of writing; you are able to conduct a thorough research in any sequence of your choice.

Adapted from: <http://essaywritingservices.org/blog/page/13>

An Example of a Narrative Outline

Here is an example of a narrative paragraph outline on the topic “My first day at school”.

Exercise 1: Below is a skeleton outline. The outline is organized thematically. Add more details to the events by answering the questions. (Spencer, L. 2004. A Step by Step Guide to Narrative Writing. Rosen)

The introduction:

In October 2013, I woke up that day knowing that today I'd have to face a new school, new students, and new teachers.

Body:

(What did you do that morning: getting up, breakfast, getting dressed...how did you go to school? Did you go alone?)

Event 1: When I arrived to school (how did you feel? How did the school look like?(big/small, old/new, ...), what did you see? Did you meet someone you already know?)

Event 2: I was late for my first class. (Why did you think you were late? How did you feel? Did you ask someone for directions?)

Event 3: When I finally found my classroom, it turned out that I was not late (why weren't you late? Were there many students in the classroom? Was the teacher there?)

Event 4: I found a desk near the back of the room (did you sit down next to someone? Why did you sit down at the back?)

Event 5: I dropped my book on the floor (why did you drop it? Was it an accident?)

Event 6: Suddenly, there was a loud “boom”, and all eyes were on me (How did you feel? what was the teacher's reaction?)

Conclusion:

It was finally over. My first day at school was filled with drama. (When did your day end? How did you feel then?)

Exercise 2: Write a coherent and unified paragraph using the outline above.

Exercise 3. Rearrange the sentences below. The first and the last sentences are in their correct places

1. Learning something new can be a scary experience.
2. New situations always make me a bit nervous, and my first swimming lesson was no exception
3. Although they were both older than me, they didn't seem to be embarrassed about not knowing how to swim.
4. What I didn't realize was that learning to swim would also make me a more confident person.

5. I also thought it would be good exercise and help me to become physically stronger
6. After a couple of minutes the teacher came over
7. One of the hardest things I've ever had to do was learn how to swim.
8. She smiled and introduced herself, and two more students joined us
9. I was always afraid of the water, but I decided that swimming was an important skill that I should learn.
10. After I changed into my bathing suit in the locker room, I stood timidly by the side of the pool waiting for the teacher and other students to show up.
11. I began to feel more at ease.”

Exercise 4. List the events in the paragraph

1. Writer expresses fear- learning how to swim
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Exercise 5. Write another paragraph to complete the story. Use the five WHs (what, how, when, where, why). These are questions that can help you generate ideas.

What did the teacher ask you to do?

How did you feel when you first touched the water?

How was the water?

What tools were you using inside the water?

What swims/techniques did you learn during your first class?

When did your first class start/end? How long did it last?

How did you feel at the end of the swimming class?

THE NARRATIVE PARAGRAPH

A narrative paragraph 'tells a story', that is, it tells about a series of events that happened to the narrator. It is usually told in time sequence with a definite beginning, middle and end.

Any student writing a narrative paragraph for the first time must use *transitions*. These special words help the writer develop a logical, unified paragraph. The most common kind of transition used in narrative writing is the time relationship transition.

After Afterward, afterwards As At the same time Before Briefly By that time Currently During Earlier Eventually Finally First.second... For (five minutes,etc...) Immediately In the meantime Last	Later Meanwhile Next Now Once Presently Recently Simultaneously So far Sometime, sometimes Soon/sooner Still Suddenly Then Today Until When Whenever while
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Time relationship	Eventually First In the meantime Meanwhile	Next Now Once Second Soon	Sooner Then Today Until When
Transitions	After Afterwards	Earlier Before	During

Using Transitions in Narrative Writing

Exercise

The following narrative paragraph lacks time transitions. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate transitions to give the paragraph coherence. (*glues* the structure together)

Let me tell you the story about a woman named Jyll and a friend of hers called Jack. – The 1. _____ thing that happened was that Jyll was running out of fresh water at her cabin. She decided she would have to walk into town to pick up some fresh spring water. 2. _____ she left she wanted to contact her neighbour, Jack, to let him know she would be out of the area for the day. 3. _____ she left the cabin, she grabbed the old wooden pail. 4. _____ she would use it as a signal to Jack that she was absent from the cabin. She tied a rope around the handle of the pail and 5. _____ was able to toss the pail up into the air and over the giant arbutus tree next to the cabin.

High up there it could be seen by Jack while he stood on the porch of his cabin down the road. He would know she was away from the cabin. This was a safety measure. Jyll 6. _____ went off to town for the spring water not knowing that Jack had gone tumbling down. 7. _____ that day, it was discovered what had happened. 8. _____ Jyll had gone to fetch the pail for water, she hadn't noticed Jack coming around the bend in the forest path. 9. _____ the doctor and police were able to reconstruct the scene of the crime. It seems that when Jyll threw the pail up in the tree, it hit Jack's crown on its way down. 10. _____ Jack has had his nob patched, but he hasn't seemed the same fellow. 11. _____ Jyll has been known to giggle at Jack's disaster which sometimes gets her in trouble with his mother. 12. _____ Jack and Jyll still play at being neighbours, but Jack won't go near the water pail.

Unity in the Narrative Paragraph

The order in which the events are presented in the narrative paragraph is very important to the overall unity of a paragraph. If your ideas are not presented in time sequence, then the paragraph will be scrambled. We may like our eggs scrambled, but scrambled ideas create a lack of understanding.

Exercise

Try to unscramble the following paragraph by numbering the sentences in the order they should appear.

- _____ Finally I was able to calm down long enough to understand what the man was saying
- _____ In downtown Calgary it can sometimes seem quite dangerous when the sun goes down.
- _____ This danger became very real to me one summer evening.
- _____ Next he leaned ominously into the car blowing toxic liquor fumes across my face.

- _____ During the rush hour one evening after work, I was driving down Centre Street, and was stopped by the red light across from the York Hotel.
- _____ Before I knew what had happened an old man had grabbed my door handle.
- _____ Later I realised how foolish I had been to drive with the doors unlocked.
- _____ Now I started to panic as his hands fumbled on the car seat because I thought he was grabbing for my purse.
- _____ After this experience, my sense of safety in Calgary was destroyed.
- _____ Then I realised all he wanted was a cigarette, and gingerly I extended the pack to him
- _____ When he started muttering, I drew back even further against the driver's door.
- _____ After snarling, "Darn light stuff", he took two smokes and my lighter, and backed out of the car.

Re-write the following topic sentences into concluding sentences.

1. Last night my television set seemed to conspire against me.
2. The worst thing that ever happened to me was the night of the bear.
3. During my teens, school became an enemy that tortured my brain, especially in my grade English class.
4. An adventure can happen to you everyday, so just listen to my story.
5. I'm not the most organised person in the world, and the results of this can have disastrous effects.