

Lesson 11 The Writing Process: Personal Narrative

Writing a personal narrative gives you a chance to share an important or funny event with your readers. As you write, you may even discover something about yourself. First, review the steps of the writing process.

Prewrite: Choose a topic. Collect ideas. Make lists or charts. Organize ideas.

Draft: Write ideas down on paper in sentences.

Revise: Fix mistakes in draft. Add details. Change things around to make the writing better. Rewrite the sentences.

Proofread: Check for final mistakes in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

Publish: Make a final, error-free copy. Share with readers.

Prewrite

Personal narratives do not have to be about amazing races, life-and-death rescues, or unbelievable events. They can be about very ordinary things. Remember the narrative you read on page 31? Mick wrote about walking to school.

Look again at the ideas on page 32 and the notes you made. Choose one of those ideas, or another idea that you like, and begin to explore it here.

My idea: _____

List as many details as you can think of quickly. Remember the event and its sights, sounds, smells, and tastes.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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Choosing a topic is an important step. If your topic is too big, you'll be writing forever. If your topic is too small, you won't have enough to say. Here are some examples.

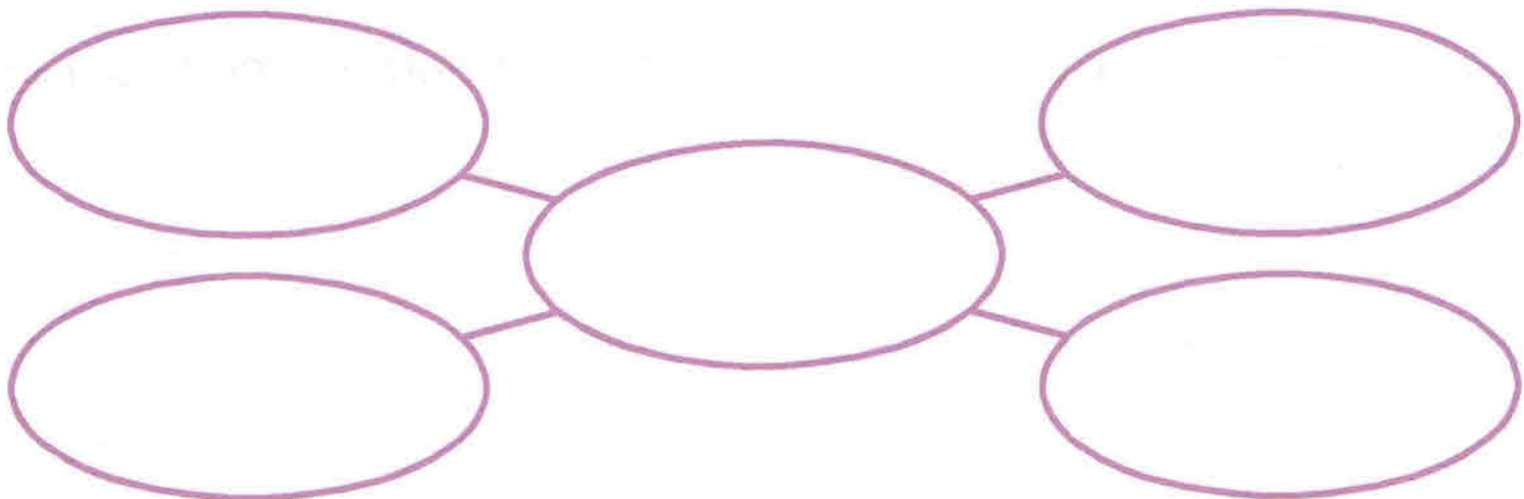
Shawna wanted to write about second grade, her favorite year so far. Well, a lot happened in second grade. That's too much to cover. So, Shawna tried to think about just one part of second grade. She wrote about her teacher, Mrs. Carlson.

Steve wanted to write about what he got for his birthday. He listed his presents. Well, there's more to a birthday than just presents. Steve's readers might be more interested in how Steve's family celebrates. Steve wrote about his birthday celebration and his presents.

Think about the idea you started to explore on page 33. Ask yourself these questions.

- Can I think of plenty of details to make my writing interesting?
- Do I think I can cover my idea in about one page?
- Will my topic be interesting to my readers?

If you don't think your topic will work, go back to page 33 and develop another one. If you do think your topic will work, begin organizing your ideas. Use the idea web below. Write your topic in the center. Add circles, as needed, to connect your ideas and details.



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Now that you have selected a topic, try to think of all the details. Answer these questions.

Who are the people involved in your story? List them below.

What events happened?

How did the events make you feel?

How did other people respond to the events? What did they do or say?

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Now, it is time to put your ideas in order. Think about the story you are about to tell in your personal narrative. Use the sequence chart on this page to list the events, in order. Use transition words from page 30.

A sequence chart for writing a personal narrative. It consists of ten horizontal rectangular boxes, each containing a single horizontal line for writing. The boxes are connected by downward-pointing arrows, indicating a chronological sequence of events.

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Revise

One of the hardest things for any writer to do is to fix, or change, his or her own work. Writers put thought and effort into their work. It's hard not to read even a first draft and think that it is perfect. However, good writers know that they can almost always improve their first drafts.

Answer these questions about your draft. If you answer "no" to any of these questions, then those are the areas that might need improvement. Feel free to make marks on your draft, so you know what needs more work. Ask a friend to read your draft and answer the questions, too.

- Did you tell about just one event or one "thing" in your narrative?
- Did you include details to make readers feel as if they are right there?
- Did you tell events in order? Did you use time words to show when events happened?
- Did you tell how people responded to events?
- Did you tell how you felt about the events?
- How does your story sound when you read it aloud? Does it have both short and long sentences to make it interesting?
- Does your story have a conclusion?

Look back through your draft and underline the action words. Did you use the same ones over and over? Did you use words that show the action? Here's an example.

The sound ~~happened~~ ^{rang out} again. Dad and I looked at each other. We ~~went~~ ^{crept} down the stairs. We didn't see anything unusual.

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Proofread

Now is the time to correct those last little mistakes. Proofreading is easier if you look for just one kind of error at a time. So, read through once for capital letters. Read your narrative again for end punctuation. Then, read again for spelling. Here is a checklist to help you as you proofread your revised narrative. Ask a friend to proofread your writing, too.

- ___ Each sentence begins with a capital letter.
- ___ Each sentence ends with the correct punctuation (period, question mark, or exclamation point).
- ___ Each sentence states a complete thought.
- ___ All words are spelled correctly. (If you're not sure, check a dictionary.)

When proofreaders work, they use certain symbols. Using these symbols makes proofreading easier.

- ^T
≡ three little lines under a letter mean that something should be capitalized. Write the capitalized letter above it.
- If there is a period missing, do this ○
- Can you insert a question mark like this?
- Don't forget your exclamation points!
- Fix misspelled words like ^{this}
~~his~~.
- Make this mark (¶) to show where to indent a paragraph.

Use these symbols as you proofread your personal narrative. Remember to read your writing out loud. Sometimes it is easier to catch mistakes when reading out loud.

