

# ENGLISH I

## Personal Narrative Essay Assignment

**Assignment:** Please write a narrative about a meaningful incident or experience in your life. Choosing a very specific place or time will help you write the essay—writing about a huge block of time will make it difficult to choose details and then organize the essay. Develop the essay with details that will demonstrate the significance of your experience. For the purposes of this assignment, you can embellish and add fictional elements to your narrative.

Your first draft is due: \_\_\_\_\_  
**BRING TWO PRINTED COPIES!!!**

Your Final/ best draft is due: \_\_\_\_\_

### How long should it be?

1-3 pages, typed, double spaced, standard margins, 12 point Times New Roman font.

### What is a Narrative Essay?

Narrative essays tell a story. These essays are often anecdotal, experiential, and personal—allowing writers to express themselves in a creative and moving ways.

Here are some guidelines for writing a narrative essay:

- **The essay should have a purpose:** Make a point! Think of this as the thesis of your story. If there is no point to what you are narrating, why narrate it at all?

- **The essay should be written from a clear point of view:** It is quite common for narrative essays to be written from the standpoint of the author; however, this is not the sole perspective to be considered. Creativity in narrative essays often manifests itself in the form of authorial perspective.

- **Use clear and concise language throughout the essay:** Much like the descriptive essay, narrative essays are effective when the language is carefully, particularly, and artfully chosen. Use specific language to evoke specific emotions and senses in the reader.

- **The use of the first person pronoun 'I' is welcomed:** You are more than welcome to write in the first person for this assignment, but again, use the perspective that makes the most sense for your story.

*-- adapted from Purdue OWL Writing Lab*

### What makes a good personal narrative?

- A good personal narrative will take the reader step by step through the experience.
- A good personal narrative uses the senses to describe things. The reader wants to smell, touch, taste, hear and see the story unfold. This can be done using sensory details such as imagery, foreshadowing, personification, and much more.
- A good personal narrative is specific and has a clear conflict (internal and external).
- A good personal narrative doesn't have to be 100 percent truthful. If bending the truth effectively enhances part of the experience, then that's ok.

### How do I get started?

Do not attempt to write about a large chunk of time, such as "Junior high school," or "My 14 years in the navy." Instead, the essay should examine in detail a single event such as, "My first junior high track meet," or "What it's like to walk home from school in a hurricane." If you are struggling to come up with a topic, there are some prompts on the back to get you started.

### Are there any other requirements?

- Clear internal & external conflict
- Use of sensory details such as imagery, foreshadowing, personification, metaphor, simile, etc.
- Use of dialogue and characterization

## PERSONAL NARRATIVE ESSAY PROMPTS

1. [Being Unprepared] We all sometimes find ourselves unprepared—think of a time when you felt entirely unprepared for something, and describe that feeling to your audience. Your paper should help readers understand what it felt like to be unprepared.
2. [Lightbulb Moment] Think of an experience when you realized that you suddenly understood an idea, a skill, or a concept you had been struggling with. Write a narrative that tells the story of your movement toward understanding. How did you finally come to understand? What changed your perceptions and gave you a new understanding? Your paper should help readers understand how you felt to struggle with the idea or skill and then to understand.
3. [Childhood Event] Choose a vivid time from your childhood. Describe the event in detail in order to convey why it was important and memorable to you.
4. [Achieving a Goal] Think of a time when you achieved a personal goal. Tell your readers about the story of how you met your goal. Be sure that your readers understand why the goal is important to you.
5. [The Good and the Bad] Think about an event in your life that seemed bad but turned out to be good. Tell the story of the event that you experienced and help your readers understand how an event that seemed negative turned out to have valuable consequences.
6. [Being a Teacher] Teaching someone else how to do something can be rewarding. Think of a skill that you've taught someone else how to do. Think about the events that made up the process of teaching the skill, and narrate the story for your readers.
7. [Changing Places] Places change. Think of a place that you know well that has changed over the course of your life. Why did it change? What did the change mean to you? Readers should know the details of the change, and they should know how you feel about the changes that occurred.
8. [Personal Rituals] Describe a personal ritual that you, your friends, or your family has. Narrate the events that take place when you complete your ritual so that your readers understand the steps that the ritual includes and why you complete them.
9. [Standing Up] Choose a time when you did something that required courage. Your narrative should show your readers why you decided to make a stand or try something that took nerve, give specifics on the events, and share how you felt after the event.
10. [Disagreeing] Think of a time when you disagreed with a decision that had been made and did something about it. Whatever happened, your job is to write a paper that narrates the events that occurred -- from the decision that was made to your response. Be sure that your paper gives enough details that your readers understand why you disagreed with the decision and why you felt that your response was appropriate.
11. [Free Choice] If you have an idea that doesn't meet the other prompts, run your ideas by Ms. Berti!