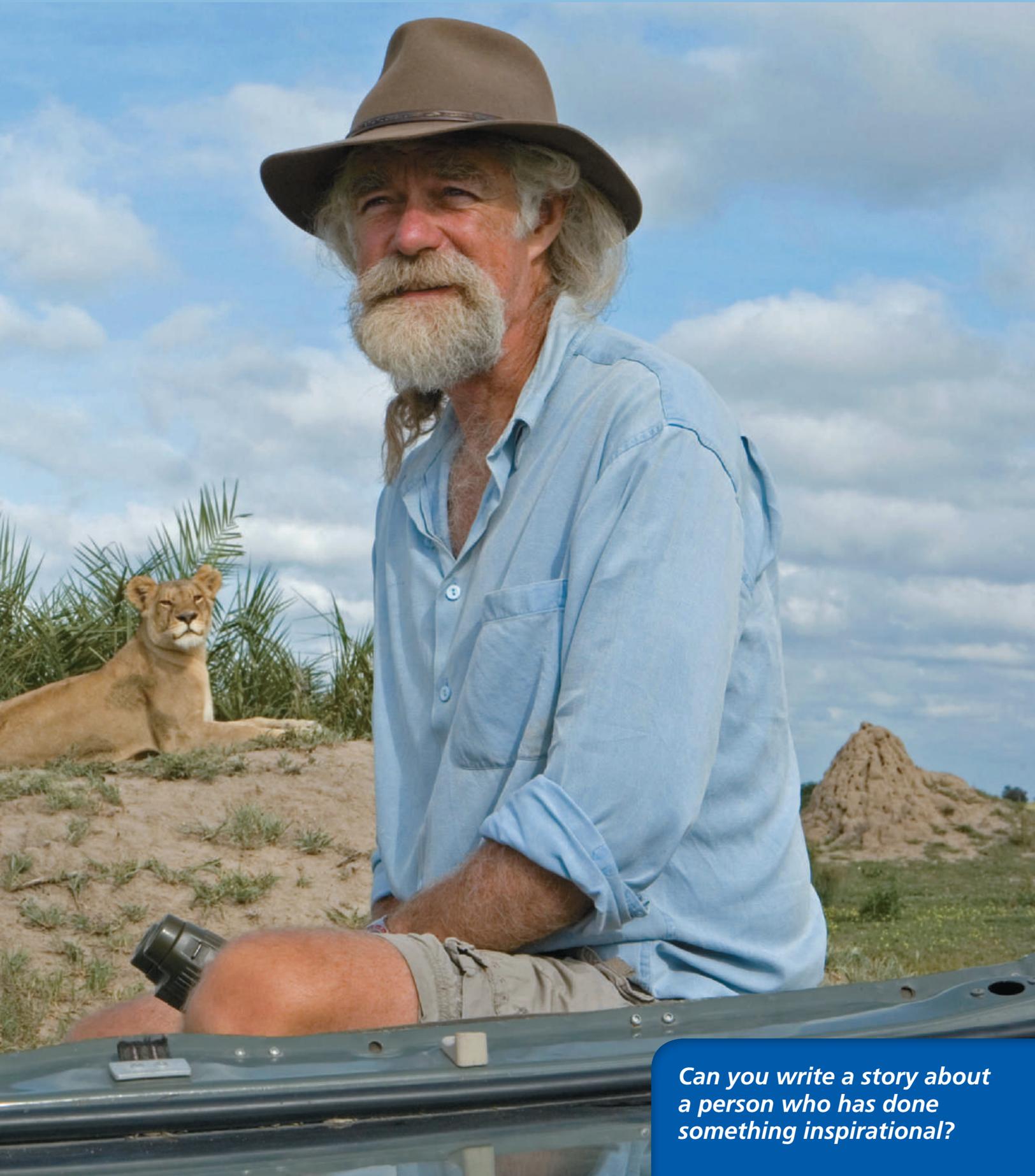


Narrative Essays



National Geographic explorers Beverly and Dereck Joubert are in Duba Plains, Botswana. Their accomplishments include launching the Big Cats Initiative, a global awareness program to protect lions, tigers, cheetahs, leopards, and jaguars.

OBJECTIVES To learn how to write a narrative essay
To use connectors and time relationship words
To understand adjective clauses



Can you write a story about a person who has done something inspirational?

What Is a Narrative Essay?

A **narrative** essay tells a story. In fact, *narrative* is another word for *story*. In this unit, you will learn how to organize and write a narrative essay. Even though the narrative essay has the same basic form as most other academic essays, it allows the writer to be a little more creative than academic essays usually do. Narratives can tell long stories or just a few minutes' worth of excitement. While the narrative essay has a particular structure, narrative ideas are often used in different writing tasks, such as argument or compare-contrast.

Structure of a Story

Several important elements make up a good story:

Setting The setting is the location where the action in a story takes place.

Theme The theme is the basic idea of the story. Very often the theme will deal with a topic that is common in life or human nature, such as independence, envy, courage, failure, and success.

Mood The mood is the feeling or atmosphere that the writer creates for the story. It could be happy, hopeful, suspenseful, or scary. Both the setting and descriptive vocabulary create the mood in a narrative.

Characters The characters are the people in the story. They are affected by the mood of the story, and they react to the events in which they are involved.

Plot The plot is what happens in the story, that is, the sequence of events. The plot often includes a climax or turning point at which the characters or events change.

Just like other types of essays, an effective narrative essay also includes these elements:

- a **thesis** that sets up the action in the introduction
- **transition sentences** that connect events and help the reader follow the story
- a **conclusion** that ends the story action and provides a moral, prediction, or revelation



The Introduction

The **introduction** of a narrative essay is the paragraph that begins your story. In the introduction, you describe the setting, introduce the characters, and prepare your audience for the action to come. Of course, the introduction should have a hook and a thesis.

The Narrative Hook

You learned in Unit 1 that the **hook** in an essay is the part of the introduction—usually the first few sentences—that grabs readers’ attention. Hooks are especially important in narrative essays because they help set the stage for the story. The hook makes readers start guessing about what will happen next. Let’s look at the hook from Essay 8 that you will read in Activity 2.

I had never been more anxious in my life. I had just spent the last three endless hours trying to get to the airport so that I could travel home.

Does this hook make you want to know what happened to the narrator? The hook should make the reader ask *wh*- questions about the essay. You may have thought of questions like these when you read the preceding hook:

- Who is the narrator and why is he or she anxious?
- Where is the airport?
- What made the trip to the airport seem endless?
- Why is this person going home?

ACTIVITY 1 Identifying Hooks

Read the sentences below. Which three sentences would not be good hooks for a narrative essay? Put a ✓ next to these sentences. Be ready to explain why you think these sentences do not work well as hooks for narrative essays.

1. _____ The roar of race-car engines ripped through the blazing heat of the day.
2. _____ It was freezing on that sad December day.
3. _____ After my brother’s accident, I sat alone in the hospital waiting room.
4. _____ My friend and I should not have been walking home alone so late on that dark winter night.
5. _____ Whales are by far the largest marine mammals.
6. _____ She gave her friend a birthday gift.
7. _____ The gleaming snow lay over the treacherous mountain like a soft white blanket, making the terrain seem safe instead of deadly.
8. _____ The Russian dictionary that we use in our language class has 500 pages.
9. _____ Amber never expected to hear the deadly sound of a rattlesnake in her kitchen garden.
10. _____ A shot rang out in the silence of the night.

The Thesis

In most types of essays, the **thesis** states the main idea of the essay and tells what the organization of the information will be. However, in a narrative essay, the thesis introduces the action that begins in the first paragraph of the essay. Look at these example thesis statements:

Now, as I watched the bus driver set my luggage on the airport sidewalk, I realized that my frustration had only just begun.

I wanted my mother to watch me race down the steep hill, so I called out her name and then nudged my bike forward.

Because his pride would not allow him to apologize, Ken now had to fight the bully, and he was pretty sure that he would not win.

These thesis statements do not tell the reader what happens. They only introduce the action that will follow. The paragraphs in the body will develop the story.

The Body

The **body** of your narrative essay contains most of the plot—the supporting information. The action in the plot can be organized in many different ways. One way is **chronological** or time order. In this method, each paragraph gives more information about the story as it proceeds in time—the first paragraph usually describes the first event, the second paragraph describes the second event, and so on.

Transitional Sentences

In an essay with chronological organization, each paragraph ends with a **transitional sentence**. Transitional sentences have two purposes: (1) to signal the end of the action in one paragraph, and (2) to provide a link to the action of the next paragraph. These sentences are vital because they give your story unity and allow the reader to follow the action easily. The following example is from Essay 8 on page 43, Paragraphs 2 and 3. Notice how the ideas in the last sentence of Paragraph 2 (the transitional sentence, underlined) and the first sentence of Paragraph 3 (underlined) are connected.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 | This was my first visit to the international terminal of the airport, and nothing was familiar. I could not make sense of any of the signs. Where was the check-in counter? Where should I take my luggage? I had no idea where the immigration line was. I began to panic. What time was it? Where was my plane? <u>I had to find help because I could not be late!</u> |
| 3 | <u>I tried to ask a passing businessman for help, but my words all came out wrong.</u> He just scowled and walked away. What had happened? I had been in this country for a whole semester, and I could not even remember how to ask for directions. This was awful! Another bus arrived at the terminal, and the passengers stepped off carrying all sorts of luggage. Here was my chance! I could follow them to the right place, and I would not have to say a word. |

The Conclusion

Like academic essays, narrative essays need to have concluding ideas. In the **conclusion**, you finish describing the action in the essay. The final sentence can have two functions:

1. It can deliver the **moral** of the story by telling the reader what the character(s) learned from the experience.
2. It can make a **prediction** or a **revelation** (disclosure of something that was not known before) about future actions that will happen as a result of the events in the story.

Look at these examples:

Moral The little boy had finally learned that telling the truth was the most important thing to do.

Prediction I can only hope that one day I will be able to do the same for another traveler who is suffering through a terrible journey.

Revelation Every New Year's Eve, my wife and I return to that magical spot and remember the selfless act that saved our lives.

Writer's Note

Storytelling Tip

If you describe the sights, smells, and sounds of the story, you will bring the story alive for the reader. Try to include a few adjectives in your sentences. The more descriptive the information, the more the reader will connect with the story you are telling. Make readers feel that they are there with you as you experience what you are describing.

In the following example, the writer uses adjectives (underlined) to add depth to the story by giving additional information.

I walked into the noisy classroom and looked for a place to sit down. In the back of the well-lit room, I saw an old wooden desk and walked toward it. After a few moments, the anxious students quieted down when they observed the prim English teacher enter the room.

ACTIVITY 2 Studying a Narrative Essay

Discuss the Preview Questions with a classmate. Then read the essay and answer the questions that follow.

Preview Questions

1. Have you ever had trouble getting from one place to another while traveling? Where were you going? What happened that made this travel difficult?
2. Can everyday people be considered heroes? What do you consider to be a heroic act?

Essay 8

Frustration at the Airport

- 1 I had never been more anxious in my life. I had just spent the last three endless hours trying to get to the airport so that I could travel home. Now, as I watched the bus driver set my luggage on the airport sidewalk, I realized that my frustration had only just begun.
- 2 This was my first visit to the international terminal of the airport, and nothing was familiar. I could not make sense of any of the signs. Where was the check-in counter? Where should I take my luggage? I had no idea where the immigration line was. I began to panic. What time was it? Where was my plane? I had to find help because I could not be late!

- 3 I tried to ask a passing businessman for help, but my words all came out wrong. He just **scowled** and walked away. What had happened? I had been in this country for a whole semester, and I could not even remember how to ask for directions. This was awful! Another bus arrived at the **terminal**, and the passengers came out carrying all sorts of luggage. Here was my chance! I could follow them to the right place, and I would not have to say a word.
- 4 I dragged my enormous suitcase behind me and followed the group. We finally reached the elevators. Oh, no! They all fit in it, but there was not enough room for me. I watched in **despair** as the elevator doors closed. I had no idea what to do next. I got on the elevator when it returned and **gazed** at all the buttons. Which one could it be? I pressed button 3. The elevator slowly climbed up to the third floor and **jerked** to a stop. A high, squeaking noise announced the opening of the doors, and I looked around **timidly**.
- 5 Tears formed in my eyes as I saw the **deserted** lobby and realized that I would miss my plane. Just then an **elderly** airport employee **shuffled** around the corner. He saw that I was lost and asked if he could help. He gave me his handkerchief to dry my eyes as I related my **predicament**. He smiled kindly, and led me down a long hallway. We walked up some stairs, turned a corner, and, at last, there was customs! He led me past all the lines of people and pushed my luggage to the inspection counter.
- 6 When I turned to thank him for all his help, he was gone. I will never know that kind man's name, but I will always remember his unexpected **courtesy**. He helped me when I needed it the most. I can only hope that one day I will be able to do the same for another traveler who is suffering through a terrible journey.

to scowl: to frown

a terminal: an arrival and departure point for some forms of mass transportation

to despair: the condition of having no hope

to gaze: to look at slowly and steadily

to jerk: to move with an abrupt motion

timidly: hesitantly, shyly

deserted: empty

elderly: older; mature

to shuffle: to walk by sliding one's feet along the ground

a predicament: a troubling situation

a courtesy: a kind or polite action



Post-Reading

1. What is the narrative hook? _____

2. Do you think the hook is effective? In other words, did it grab your attention? Why, or why not?

3. Where is the setting of this story?

4. What is the theme, or the basic idea, of “Frustration at the Airport”?

5. Read the final sentences in Paragraphs 2, 3, 4, and 5. How does each one prepare the reader for the action to come?

6. What do you think the mood of the story is? What feeling or atmosphere does the writer create?

7. List the characters in this essay.

8. What verb tense is used in “Frustration at the Airport”?_____. Write five verbs that the writer uses._____

9. This essay is arranged in chronological order. In a few words, describe what happens first, second, third, and so on.

10. Underline the transitional sentences.

11. Does the story end with a moral, prediction, or revelation? _____ Write the final sentence here.

Building Better Sentences: For further practice, go to Practice 8 on page 196 in Appendix 1.

ACTIVITY 3 Outlining Practice

Below is an outline for “Frustration at the Airport.” Some of the information is missing. Reread the essay beginning on page 43 and complete the outline.

Title: _____

I. Introduction (Paragraph 1)

A. Hook: I had never been more anxious in my life. I had just spent the last three endless hours trying to get to the airport so that I could travel home.

B. Thesis statement: _____

II. Body

A. Paragraph 2 (Event 1) topic sentence: This was my first visit to the international terminal of the airport, and nothing was familiar.

SUPPORT

1. The signs were confusing.
2. I began to panic.
3. Transition sentence: _____

B. Paragraph 3 (Event 2) topic sentence: _____

SUPPORT

1. He scowled and walked away.
2. I could not remember how to ask for directions.
3. _____
4. Transition sentence: _____

C. Paragraph 4 (Event 3) topic sentence: I dragged my enormous suitcase behind me and followed the group.

- SUPPORT**
1. _____
 2. I got on the elevator and looked at the buttons.
 3. _____
 4. Transition sentence: _____

D. Paragraph 5 (Event 4) topic sentence: Tears formed in my eyes as I saw the deserted lobby and realized that I would miss my airplane.

- SUPPORT**
1. An airport employee offered to help.
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. Transition sentence: He led me past all the lines of people and pushed my luggage to the inspection counter.

III. Conclusion (Paragraph 6)

- A. Close of the action: _____
- B. I will never know his name, but I will always remember his unexpected courtesy.
- C. _____
- D. Final sentence (moral, prediction, or revelation): _____

ACTIVITY 4 Adding Supporting Information

The following narrative essay is missing large parts of the story (supporting information in the body). As you read, add information that moves the story along. Be sure to write transition sentences at the end of Paragraphs 2, 3, and 4. If you need more space, use a separate piece of paper.

Essay 9

A Bad Day

1 I should never have deleted the chain letter e-mail from my computer. The letter clearly warned me that if I did, I would have one day of bad luck. Unlike my mother, I tend not to believe these types of things bringing bad luck: breaking a mirror, someone giving me the “evil eye,” or even opening an umbrella in the house. As a result, I got rid of this **superstitious** e-mail with one quick click of the mouse. That night, however, as I fell asleep, I had the uncomfortable feeling that something was not quite right.

2 When I woke up the next morning, I was surprised to find that I had overslept and would be late for work. As I rushed down the stairs to eat a quick breakfast, I **tripped** over my bag and _____

3 On my way to work, I decided to take a shortcut through an old part of town.

superstitious:
irrational, believing
in things that are not
based on science

to trip: to stumble or
fall



4 When I arrived at work, I found a note from my boss on my desk. She wanted to see me **right away**. I took a deep breath and walked into her office. As I stepped inside, I noticed a scowl on her face.

right away:
immediately

5 Finally, after a long and difficult day, I returned home to find that my air conditioner was broken. I could not take it anymore! It had been the worst day ever, and I did not want anything else to happen. I rushed to my computer, opened up my e-mail, and went directly to the deleted e-mail folder. I opened up the letter and reread the words: “Send ten copies of this e-mail to your friends, and you will have good luck for a year.” I put on my reading glasses and began scrolling through my list of e-mail contacts. They could take their chances, but I was not going to have any more bad luck!

Building Better Sentences: For further practice, go to Practice 9 on page 196 in Appendix 1.

Grammar for Writing

Connectors and Time Relationship Words

The most common way to organize events in a narrative essay is in chronological order. The event that occurs first is in the introduction, and the events that follow are in the next paragraphs (the body) and continue to the end (the conclusion).

To make sure that readers understand time relationships, effective writers use connecting words and phrases to show how events progress. Look at the time words in the chart below. These are connectors that you can use in narrative writing.

Chronological Order	Prepositions	Time Words That Begin Clauses *
first (second, third, etc.)	after (a moment)	after
next	at (9:00 A.M.)	as soon as
finally	by (bedtime, then)	before
later	during (the afternoon)	until
now	from (then on)	when
then	until (five o'clock)	whenever
		while

*When time clauses occur at the beginning of a sentence, they **MUST** be followed by a comma.

Sentence Variety with Prepositions of Time Plus Key Nouns for Better Cohesion

Essays that are written using only one or two sentence patterns can be dull to read. Good writers try to include variety in their sentences. Here are two ways to add variety with time words.

1. Follow the time word *after* with a noun.

Change Marta studied engineering at the University of Charleston. She graduated in 2013. Then she got a job with Johnson and Rowe, a local engineering firm.

to Marta studied engineering at the University of Charleston. **After her graduation in 2013**, she got a job with Johnson and Rowe, a local engineering firm.

Change I walked up the stairs to the stage. I was so frightened to begin my speech that I could actually hear my teeth chattering. I remembered my deep breathing exercise, looked confidently at my audience, and began to speak.

to I walked up the stairs to the stage. I was so frightened to begin my speech that I could actually hear my teeth chattering. **After my deep breathing exercise**, I looked confidently at my audience and began to speak.

2. Follow *after*, *before*, *while*, and *when* with a gerund (an *-ing* verb form used as a noun)

Change A rare golden Sitka spruce was cut down by vandals. It had been growing for more than three hundred years.

to **After growing** for more than three hundred years, a rare golden Sitka spruce was cut down by vandals.

Change Joanna Cannon ran for mayor. She promised to lower property taxes.

to **While running** for mayor, Joanna Cannon promised to lower property taxes.

*A gerund is a verb form that ends in *-ing* and is used as a noun, such as *walking* and *studying*.

For a more complete list of connectors, see the *Brief Writer's Handbook with Activities*, pages 180–181.

ACTIVITY 5 Adding Connectors

Read the essay. Fill in the blanks with an appropriate connector or time relationship word or phrase. Refer to the chart on page 50.

Essay 10

Becoming a Man

- 1 When they are asked who their **idol** is, most people will name a famous person. I am not most people. My idol is a person whom I have known my entire life. He is my brother Claudio, and even today he teaches me about life. The day that Claudio taught me the importance of being a man is the day he left home to go to college.
- 2 It was an early Saturday morning in August. As usual, we were woken up by the sound of our sister playing the piano. She was always playing that **silly** instrument! _____ a few minutes of lying in our beds, wishing she would stop, we slowly got up. _____ that point, we knew we could not fall back asleep. She was probably going to play that piano all day!
- 3 _____ we reached the kitchen, there was a surprise for Claudio—his favorite breakfast. _____ Mom saw us, she gave us a big smile and told us to sit down for our pancakes. It was obvious that this was an important day for everyone _____ we finishing breakfast, Claudio went upstairs to continue **packing**.

an idol: hero

silly: stupid, ridiculous

to pack: to put clothes in a suitcase



4 _____ I heard him call my name. I ran to the room we shared, sat down on the bed, and watched Claudio close his suitcase. He turned to me and nodded. “It’s time, brother,” he said. I thought he was referring to his time to leave the house. Actually, he went on to explain all of the important responsibilities that I would have after he was gone. Claudio meant that it was time for me to **take on** a bigger role in the family. _____ that point, I understood everything.

5 _____ then on, I took my **role** as the “man of the house” very seriously. With Claudio away, I would need to be available for Mom whenever she needed me. What have I learned from my brother? I have learned about family, love, and responsibility.

to take on: undertake, face

a role: job, function

Building Better Sentences: For further practice, go to Practice 10 on page 197 in Appendix 1.

Grammar for Writing

Adjective Clauses

Adjective clauses are one of the most powerful ways to combine two ideas (simple sentences) into one complex sentence. Study the following rules and examples:

1. Adjective clauses must contain a subject and a verb.
2. The subject of an adjective clause can be *who* (people), *which* (things), or *that* (people or things).

Samir studies at a university. The university is well known for its technology programs.

adjective clause

Samir studies at a university that is well known for its technology programs.

3. If the information in the adjective clause is necessary to clarify the person or thing you are writing about, do not use a comma to separate the ideas. However, if the information in the adjective clause is not necessary to understand the meaning of the sentence, use a comma, or pair of commas, to separate the adjective clause from the rest of the sentence. In other words, commas indicate the information is extra. Study the examples below.

Necessary Information	Unnecessary Information
<p>The city that we will visit last on our trip is located in central Florida.</p> <p>NOTE: When the writer says <i>the city</i>, it is not clear which city the writer is talking about. The adjective clause (<i>that we will visit last on our trip</i>) is important information for readers because it tells them which city in central Florida the writer is referring to.</p>	<p>Orlando, which we will visit last on our trip, is located in central Florida.</p> <p>NOTE: When the writer says <i>Orlando</i>, the readers know which city the writer is talking about. The information about when the writer will visit this city does not affect our ability to know that the writer is referring to Orlando.</p>

ACTIVITY 6 Adjective Clause Review

Read the following narrative essay. Find and underline the nine adjective clauses in the essay. Hint: Adjective clauses tend to begin with *who*, *that*, or *which*.

Essay 11

Learning to Drive

- 1 I could not believe it. Driving laws in Ontario allowed teenagers to get their licenses at the age of sixteen! As my sixteenth birthday approached, I beamed with excitement and anticipation. What I did not know at the time was this: The driving lessons that I learned in our old sedan would stay with me for the rest of my life.
- 2 My father, who adored driving, was the obvious choice to be my driving instructor. The first lesson took place in the **driveway**. While I sat in the passenger seat, he explained the devices in the car. I was particularly frightened by the gear shift, which was sticking out of the floorboard. However, my father patiently lectured on the different floor pedals, the turn signals, and, my favorite, the car horn.
- 3 For the next lesson, I sat in the driver's seat. At that time, it felt more like a **throne** than anything else. My father asked me to turn on the car, and then he guided me into reverse. As I let up on the clutch and pressed the gas, I felt the car starting to move backward. I was controlling this vehicle! Slowly and carefully, I backed out of the driveway and into the **residential** street. After a few moments of confusion, I had the car sputtering forward in first gear.

a driveway: an area in front of a home where people park their cars

a throne: a special chair meant for nobility

residential: areas where people live, not commercial



- 4 Two weeks of lessons passed, and I was beginning to get bored with the scenery, which never changed. My father had me drive around the same block again and again. I was passing the same landmarks—the neighbors’ houses, the dead tree down the street, and the kids who were playing in the empty lot on the corner. When I could stand it no more, I asked to move to a street that had more action. “Tomorrow. I think you are ready,” my father replied, his eyes twinkling with pride.
- 5 My emotions were in overdrive the next day. I was finally on a busy street at night. I shifted from first gear to second gear with no problems. Then came third gear. When I reached the speed that I wanted, I put the car into fourth. I was flying in the old **sedan**! My father’s concerned voice broke my **spell**. He said calmly, “Honey, there’s a red light ahead.” I was traveling far above the speed limit and heading toward a red light. All the information that I had learned in the previous weeks **leaked out** of my brain. I did not know how to react. I blared the horn and flew through the intersection, which by pure luck was empty.
- 6 That night my father was **somber**. I was in tears. How lucky we had been not to have been hit by another car. I waited for him to **reprimand** me, but he did not. I was aware of the **severity** of my **moving violation**. It is now thirty years later, and I have not forgotten that day. In fact, if I accidentally drive through a red light now, I remember the emotions of a sixteen-year-old and the wisdom of a loving father who taught her to drive.

- a sedan:** a type of car
- a spell:** a state of being captivated by something
- to leak out:** escape from one’s memory
- somber:** serious
- to reprimand:** scold; lecture
- severity:** seriousness
- a moving violation:** a traffic offense

Building Better Sentences: For further practice, go to Practice 11 on page 198 in Appendix 1.

Building Better Vocabulary

ACTIVITY 7 Word Associations

Circle the word or phrase that is most closely related to the word or phrase on the left. If necessary, use a dictionary to check the meaning of words you do not know.

	A	B
1. a scowl	a happy face	an angry face
2. a predicament	good luck	trouble
3. to shuffle	ears	feet
4. to gaze	eyes	mouth
5. knowledge	a lot of information	almost no information
6. idol	celebrity	violation
7. somber	serious	understanding

8. residential*	houses and apartments	offices
9. driveway	cars	people
10. severity	funny	serious

*Indicates words that are part of the Academic Word List. See pages 183–184 for a complete list.

ACTIVITY 8 Using Collocations

Fill in each blank with the word or phrase on the left that most naturally completes the phrase on the right. If necessary, use a dictionary to check the meaning of words you do not know.

- ask / to ask how _____ for help
- journey / lobby a deserted _____
- feeling / letter an uncomfortable _____
- through / down to rush _____ the stairs
- from / by hit _____ a car
- by / on to trip _____ something
- do / make to _____ sense of something
- bed / table sit down on the _____
- say / tell to _____ the truth
- lesson / street learn a _____

Developing a Narrative Essay

When writing a narrative essay there are a few strategies that can help you. These are choosing a topic, brainstorming, and making an outline.

Choosing a Topic

When you write a narrative essay, choose a topic that is important to you—your essay will be easier to write and more interesting to read if you do. Also remember that smaller is better. The smaller the action or event you choose, the easier it will be to keep your readers' interest and describe the action fully. Choose a topic that you can write about in approximately five or six paragraphs. For example, it would be impossible to describe—in one essay—all the events that helped make you the person you are today. However, you could choose one event that made a difference in your life, such as your first job or a special award, and write an essay about that. At the same time, be careful that the topic you choose is not too small. For example, a story about how your little brother called you a name one day would not be a good topic for a narrative essay. There needs to be enough action to make a story of five or six paragraphs.

Writer's Note

Topic Tip

When you think about **possible topics for a narrative essay**, try to remember something exciting, difficult, wonderful, or frightening that happened to you. Can this event be developed into an interesting narrative essay?

Ask Yourself Questions

To help you think of some possible topics for narrative essays, ask yourself questions. Use the following questions as a guide:

- When was an important time in my life? Remember, the experience can be a very short one, such as “July 13, 2013,” in which the writer describes a five-minute segment of her life.
- What has happened in my experience that I would enjoy writing about?
- Is there an event in my life that other people (readers) would enjoy hearing about?
- How did I feel about a particular experience?
- Who was involved?
- Why do I remember this event so strongly? What effect did it have on me?
- Did anything change because of this experience?
- What interesting experiences do I know of that happened to other people?

If you are able to answer some of these questions about a specific experience that you or someone else had, then you may have a topic for a narrative essay.

ACTIVITY 9 Choosing Topics

Look at the pairs of topics. Put a ✓ next to the topic that is the better choice for a narrative essay.



1. _____ Your last year in high school
_____ Your last day in high school
2. _____ A scary airplane ride to another city
_____ A scary trip around the world
3. _____ Guidelines for buying a car
_____ Buying your first car
4. _____ Important academic ceremonies that you have participated in
_____ Your brother's embarrassing wedding ceremony
5. _____ What I did last New Year's Eve
_____ What I did last year

ACTIVITY 10 Ideas for a Narrative Essay

Take a few minutes to think about possible topics for a narrative essay. Write some ideas here.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a process to help you generate ideas about essay topics. When you brainstorm, do not worry about correct grammar or spelling. Just focus on getting your ideas on paper. Here are three ways to brainstorm ideas for an essay:

1. **Ask *wh-* questions about your topic.** With this method, you begin with a general idea of the topic that you are interested in. Then ask the questions *Who? What? When? Where? Why?* and, in some cases, *How?* The answers to these questions will help clarify what you would like to write about.



Here is an example:

General topic: *Celebrating Women's Day*

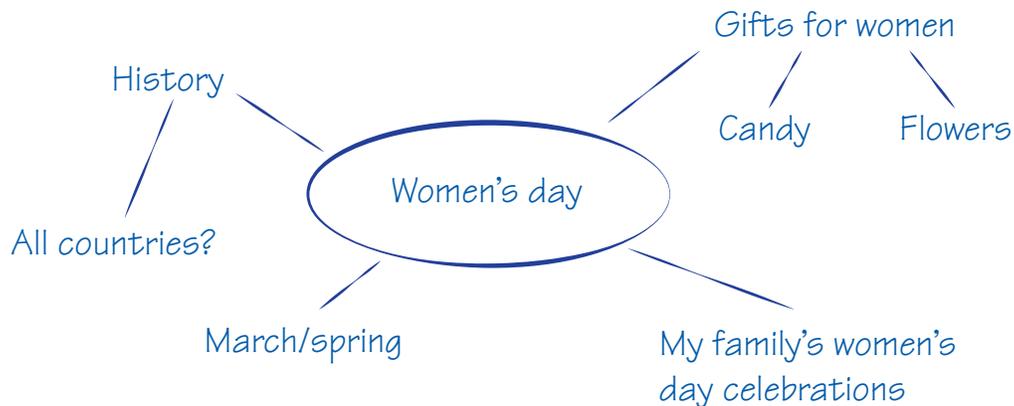
Questions: *Who celebrates Women's Day? What is the history of this celebration? When does the celebration take place? In what parts of the world is Women's Day celebrated? Why is it celebrated? How do people celebrate women on this day? How is it the same or different from Mother's Day?*

2. **Make a list of words or phrases that describe your topic.** This list can help with vocabulary choices when you write your essay. Here is a sample list on the topic of Women's Day. Remember, this is the first step in the writing process, so many of your ideas might change.

<i>March</i>	<i>flowers</i>	<i>my family</i>
<i>gifts</i>	<i>history</i>	<i>tradition</i>
<i>respect</i>	<i>candy</i>	<i>men give to women</i>

3. **Make a visual map of your essay ideas.** One kind of visual map is called **clustering**.

To make a cluster map, write your topic in the center of a piece of paper and then circle it. Then draw lines out from the circle. At the end of those lines write words and ideas associated with the topic. Write whatever comes to mind. Connect any words that are related with lines. When you are finished, you will have many new ideas about your topic. Here is an example of clustering on the topic of Women's Day:



Original Student Writing: Narrative Essay

ACTIVITY 11 Developing Narrative Ideas

Follow the steps below to develop ideas for a narrative essay.

1. Choose a topic that is suitable for a narrative essay. You may want to look at your notes from Activity 10 to help you. Remember that in a narrative essay you tell a story. Work with other students to see if your topic is appropriate.
2. After you have a suitable topic, brainstorm some ideas about your topic. Use a separate piece of paper.
3. Now it is time to begin organizing your ideas. Remember that it is not necessary to tell every detail of the story. Include only the most important actions or events that move the story forward.

- a. Introduction (beginning of the story): theme, setting, and characters.

What is the basic idea of the story? Where does the story take place? When does the story take place? Who is in the story?

- b. Body (middle of the story): mood and plot

What feeling or atmosphere do you want to create in your story? What will happen in the story?

- c. Conclusion (end of the story): end of the action, moral, prediction, or revelation

What will happen last in your story? How will you wrap up the action of the story? Will your narrative essay have a moral, make a prediction, or provide a revelation?

If you need ideas for words and phrases, see the Useful Vocabulary for Better Writing on pages 185–188.

ACTIVITY 12 Planning with an Outline

Use the outline on pages 60 and 61 as a guide to help you make a more detailed plan for your narrative essay. You may need to use either more or fewer points under each heading. Include your ideas from Activity 11. Where possible, write in complete sentences.

Topic: _____

I. Introduction (Paragraph 1)

A. Hook: _____

B. Connecting information: _____

C. Thesis statement: _____

II. Body

A. Paragraph 2 (Event 1) topic sentence: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. Transition sentence: _____

B. Paragraph 3 (Event 2) topic sentence: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. Transition sentence: _____

C. Paragraph 4 (Event 3) topic sentence: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. Transition sentence: _____

SUPPORT

SUPPORT

SUPPORT

D. Paragraph 5 (Event 4) topic sentence: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. Transition sentence: _____

III. Conclusion (Paragraph 6)

A. Close of the action: _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. Final sentence (moral, prediction, or revelation): _____

About Peer Editing

Think of the first draft of your essay as your first attempt. Before you rewrite it, it is helpful to ask someone to read your paper, offer comments, and ask questions about your essay. Many writers do not always see their weak areas, but a reader can help you see where you need to make improvements.

In class, peer editing is an easy way to get opinions on your essay. With this method, other students (your peers) read your essay and make comments using a set of questions and guidelines from the Peer Editing Sheets found on NGL.Cengage.com/GW4. You will read someone else's essay, too. Peer editing can help you improve any areas that are not strong or clear up any areas that seem confusing to the reader.

Writer's Note

Suggestions for Peer Editing

Listen carefully. In peer editing, you will receive many comments and some suggestions from other students. It is important to listen carefully to comments about your writing. You may think that what you wrote is clear and accurate, but readers can often point out places that need improvement. Don't be defensive. Remember that the comments are about the writing, not about you!

Make helpful comments. When you read your classmates' essays, choose your words and comments carefully so that you do not hurt their feelings. For example, instead of saying, "This is bad grammar," be more specific and say, "You need to make sure that every sentence has a verb." Instead of saying, "I cannot understand any of your ideas," write a more specific note such as, "What do you mean in this sentence?"

ACTIVITY 13 Peer Editing Your Outline

Exchange books with a partner and look at Activity 12. Read your partner's outline. Then use Peer Editing Sheet 1 on page NGL.Cengage.com/GW4 to help you comment on your partner's outline. There is a sample Peer Editing Sheet in Appendix 2. Use your partner's feedback to revise your outline. Make sure you have enough information to develop your supporting sentences.

ACTIVITY 14 Writing a Narrative Essay

Write a narrative essay based on your revised outline from Activity 13. Use at least two of the vocabulary words or phrases presented in Activities 7 and 8. Underline these words and phrases in your essay. Be sure to refer to the seven steps in the writing process in the *Brief Writer's Handbook with Activities* on pages 157–163.

If you need ideas for words and phrases, see the Useful Vocabulary for Better Writing on pages 185–188.

ACTIVITY 15 Peer Editing Your Essay

Exchange papers from Activity 14 with a partner. Read your partner's essay. Then use Peer Editing Sheet 2 on pages NGL.Cengage.com/GW4 to help you comment on your partner's writing. Be sure to offer positive suggestions and comments that will help your partner improve his or her writing. Consider your partner's comments as you revise your own essay.

Additional Topics for Writing

Here are more ideas for topics for a narrative essay. Before you write, be sure to refer to the seven steps in the writing process in the *Brief Writer's Handbook with Activities*, pages 157–163.

PHOTO

- TOPIC:** Look at the photograph on pages 38–39. Write a story about a person who inspires you. What does this person do? Why is it important? How does this person influence you and others?
- TOPIC 2:** Think of a person that you know well. Be sure that you feel comfortable writing about him or her. Tell a story about this person. What unusual or exciting experience has this person had? How did he or she influence you?
- TOPIC 3:** Write about an important event in history from the point of view of someone who lived at that time.
- TOPIC 4:** Choose a piece of music and listen to it. When you hear the music, what do you imagine is happening? Create a story that describes what is happening in the music.
- TOPIC 5:** Think back to your childhood and a time when you were punished for doing something wrong. Write a narrative about that event, including what you did, who you were with, and how you were punished.

Timed Writing

How quickly can you write in English? There are many times when you must write quickly, such as on a test. It is important to feel comfortable during those times. Timed-writing practice can make you feel better about writing quickly in English.

1. Take out a piece of paper.
2. Read the essay guidelines and the writing prompt.
3. Write a basic outline, including the thesis and your three main points.
4. Write a five-paragraph essay.
5. You have 40 minutes to write your essay.

Narrative Essay Guidelines

- Remember to give your essay a title.
- Double-space your essay.
- Write as legibly as possible (if you are not using a computer).
- Select an appropriate principle of organization for your topic.
- Include a short introduction that serves as background information, three body paragraphs that tell the narrative, and an appropriate conclusion.
- Try to give yourself a few minutes before the end of the activity to review your work. Check for spelling, verb tense, and subject-verb agreement mistakes.

Narrate a story about a disagreement you had with a friend (or family member) and how the disagreement was resolved.



For more practice with the grammar, vocabulary, and writing found in this unit, go to NGL.Cengage.com/GW4.