



UNIT 3

Narrative Essays

Academic Focus | Psychology

Unit Goals

Rhetorical Focus

- narrative organization

Language and Grammar Focus

- sequence in narrative essays
- subordinating conjunctions
- details in essays
- the past continuous in narrative essays
- past time clauses
- simultaneous activities

In psychology, formative experiences are experiences that shape how we see the world and what type of person we become later in life. In this unit, you will write a narrative about one such experience.



Exercise 1 Thinking about the topic

A. Discuss the picture with a partner.

- What is happening in the picture?
- How do you think the person feels before, during, and after this experience?

B. Make notes about three important events or experiences in your life.

Then discuss in small groups.

- Describe each event.
- Why was it important?
- How did it change you?

Exercise 2 Reading about the topic

U.S. President and humanitarian Jimmy Carter wrote the following narrative passage. It describes his childhood experience “mopping cotton” on his father’s farm during the 1930s. To kill insects that ate cotton plants, Carter’s family covered each cotton plant with molasses mixed with poison.

Breaking Ground to Be a Man

Mopping cotton was a terrible job. The **molasses** attracted **swarms** of flies and honeybees. They covered the buckets and followed us through the field. I usually wore short pants and a shirt during the warm months, but for this job I preferred to protect my legs with long pants. My pants quickly became covered with the poison, and stuck uncomfortably to my legs. In fact, everything about me was sticky. With time, my pants dried, and the sweet, sticky poison turned to hard sugar, so that at night my pants wouldn’t fold but stood up alone in a corner or against the furniture. Covered with poison, they had to be washed separately from the other clothing, so we didn’t change them every day. It was particularly disgusting to put them back on in the mornings.



Child farm worker, 1930s.

Adapted from Carter, James. *An Hour Before Daylight*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001. 180–181.

molasses: a thick, sugary syrup

swarms: large groups that are in motion (usually insects)

Exercise 3 Understanding the text

Write **T** for true or **F** for false for each statement.

- 1. Carter wore shorts when he mopped cotton.
- 2. The poison turned from a liquid to a solid on his pants.
- 3. Carter folded his pants every night before he went to sleep.
- 4. Carter washed his pants with his other clothes.

Exercise 4 Responding to the text

Respond to the reading by answering the following questions.

1. What three words would you use to describe Carter's experience?

-
2. How do you think the experience affected Carter's personality?
-

3. Is hard work good for children? Why or why not?
-

4. What is the most interesting sentence in the passage? Why is it interesting?
-

Exercise 5 Freewriting

Write for ten to fifteen minutes in your journal. Choose from topics below or an idea of your own. Express your thoughts and feelings. Don't worry about mistakes.

- What do you remember most about your childhood summers?
- What jobs did you do to help your family when you were young?
- Write about a bad experience you have had with an insect or insects.
- Have you ever tried to grow something? What was the experience like?
- Tell a story from your life that supports the saying, "Experience is the best teacher."



In Writing Process Step 2 you will . . .

- learn about narrative organization.
- brainstorm ideas and specific vocabulary to use in your writing.
- determine the audience and purpose for your narrative essay.
- create an outline for your essay.



WRITING TASK Some experiences change our lives and form our personalities. In this unit, you will write a narrative essay about an experience that changed you or taught you something important. Go to the Web to use the Online Writing Tutor.

Exercise 1 Brainstorming ideas

- A. Think back to the events you wrote about and discussed in Exercise 1B on page 54. Can you add any more events to the list? Choose one of the events for your assignment. Fill in the chart with notes about the event.

Event	What I Thought Before	What I Thought After

- B. On a separate piece of paper, brainstorm a list of details related to the event.

- When did it happen?
- Who were you with?
- Where did it happen?
- What happened first? Next? Last?

Exercise 2 Identifying audience and purpose

- A. Match the likely purpose to the audience.

Audience

1. _____ friends
2. _____ younger relatives
3. _____ instructors
4. _____ employers

Purpose

- a. to show what I have learned
- b. to show my ability to do a job
- c. to teach by example
- d. to entertain

- B. On a separate piece of paper, write about a possible audience for your essay.

- Who will read your essay?
- What do they already know about you and your experience?
- Is your relationship with your readers formal or informal?
- What do they expect?
- How will your choice of audience and purpose affect the way you write your essay?

Exercise 3 Brainstorming vocabulary

A. Think about the event. Try to recall your actions and emotions. Add two or three more words to each set.

1. **Actions:** hurry (to), gaze (at), warn (someone), suffer (from), notice (someone / something), _____, _____, _____
2. **Emotions:** nervous, eager, relieved, worried, amazed, confused, _____, _____,

B. Circle words you would like to use from the sets. Practice using these words in sentences. Use your dictionary for help.

Rhetorical Focus



Narrative Organization

A **narrative** is a story. It has an introduction that engages the reader's interest, details about the main event or action in the story, and a conclusion that describes the outcome.

Introduction

- The hook gets the reader's attention.
- The middle sentences introduce an event (the action of the story) by providing background information about the people, the place, and the time.
- The thesis statement prepares the reader for the action that follows.

Body Paragraphs

- The body paragraphs describe what happened in the story.
- They include details that bring the story to life.
- They often use time order to explain the event.

Conclusion

- A conclusion describes the outcome of the event.
- Narrative essays often end with a comment about the event's importance in the writer's life.

Exercise 4 Reading a student essay

Read the essay. What was the writer's embarrassing incident?

An Embarrassing Incident

Where I grew up, the rules for family life are very strict. My parents taught me that I should respect grandparents more than anyone else because grandparents had lived the longest. They had more knowledge about life, and no matter what they said, even if it did not make sense, they were right. Hugging or kissing grandparents was disrespectful. Instead, I was told to greet them by kissing their hand. I thought that everyone lived and thought just as I did. I soon found out this is not true.

One day, an American friend invited me to her birthday dinner. I was excited but at the same time nervous. I wanted her family to like me, and I wanted to use my best manners. Slowly, I walked up to the house and rang the bell. My friend came running out with a big smile, telling me she was happy that I came. Then she let me in and introduced me to her parents. They smiled and said hello. Later my friend said, "Come here. I want you to meet my grandpa." I followed her into the living room where her grandfather was sitting. She introduced us, and he reached out his hand. He was going to shake hands, but I thought he expected me to kiss his hand, so I did. He pulled his hand away and looked at me in a strange way. Everyone else in the room looked at me, and my friend started laughing.

I was confused. I sat down and tried to figure out what had happened. Just then, a little boy ran to my friend's grandfather and jumped on his lap. The little boy started to hug and kiss the grandfather. When I saw this, I got up, grabbed the little boy, and said, "NO." I guess I said it loudly because the room became silent, and all eyes were on me.

The next day at school my friend asked me why I kissed her grandfather's hand and why I told the little boy to get away from his grandfather. I explained my customs to her, and she explained hers to me. I learned that good manners are not the same in different countries. Fortunately, my friend and I stayed very good friends.

Exercise 5 Examining the student essay

A. Respond to the essay by answering the following questions.

1. Why is the background information in the introduction important?

2. Why was the writer embarrassed?

3. What did the writer learn?

B. Examine the organization of the essay by responding to the questions and statements below. Compare your answers with a partner.

1. Underline the hook. Is it one sentence or two? _____

2. Circle the questions below that are answered in the background information.

who? what? when? which?
where? how? why?

3. Underline the thesis statement. Is it one sentence or two? _____

4. Reread the body paragraphs. Circle one or two details or words that you like.

5. Reread the conclusion. Underline the sentences that explain what the writer learned. Was it a positive lesson or a negative lesson? _____

6. What audience would be most appropriate for this essay?

a. the writer's friend in the story b. a world cultures instructor

Exercise 6 Writing an outline



Review your brainstorming ideas and your freewriting exercise. Then go to the Web to print out an outline template for your essay.



In Writing Process Step 3 you will . . .

- learn about showing sequence in a narrative essay.
- learn to use subordinating conjunctions.
- learn about adding details to your essay.
- write a first draft of your narrative essay.

Exercise 1 Reading a student essay

Read the essay. What is the scary secret?

A Scary Secret

My sister and I made a dangerous mistake one summer. I was thirteen and my sister was fourteen. Our parents had taken us to the city where they grew up. We felt very grown up as we rode to the hotel in a taxi. The hotel was very big, and it had a blue tile floor. After we unpacked our suitcases, our parents wanted to go to the market. My mother told us not to go outside. "We won't," my sister promised, but I knew that she was lying. We had already decided to go out and explore this strange and beautiful city by ourselves.

As soon as my parents were out of sight, we got our things and went downstairs. We walked out of the hotel doors and down a narrow street. The sun was setting, and the light was very beautiful. We could hear the noises of traffic nearby, but the little street was quiet. Suddenly, a man with a gun stepped out from a doorway. He said, "Don't move!" He was short, and he was wearing a dark green jacket and sunglasses. He came very close, and we could smell cigarettes and something terrible in his breath. We were terrified and couldn't say anything. He said, "Give me your shoes." So I did. Then he took my sister's purse and her gold ring and ran away.

The horrible man was gone, but we were still afraid. I remember that I fell against my sister. I heard her take a deep breath; she was shaking. We ran back to the hotel, across the blue tile floor, and up to our room. We did not feel safe until we got into our room and locked the door behind us.

The man scared us, but he also taught us something important. Before this experience, we did not always listen to our parents. We now learned that we should obey them. My sister and I became obedient daughters, and we enjoyed the rest of our vacation. However, we decided not to tell our parents about our adventure. We knew they would punish us even though we had learned our lesson. This dangerous adventure is still a secret that I share with my sister.

Exercise 2 Examining the student essay

Examine the essay by responding to the following questions and statements.

1. Underline and label the hook in the introduction. How does it get your attention?

2. Underline and label the thesis statement. What can you predict after reading the thesis?

3. This writer goes into great detail during one important moment in the story. Highlight the moment. Why does it make the story more powerful?

4. Why did the writer start a new body paragraph after writing that the man ran away?

5. The conclusion tells one thing the writer learned. What else do you think the writer learned?

Language and Grammar Focus



Showing Sequence in Narrative Essays

In narrative essays, we use **time expressions** to clarify the sequence of events.

We use connectors (**time adverbs**) such as *then*, *finally*, or *eventually* to link sentences within a paragraph.

We use **subordinating conjunctions** to link clauses within a sentence.

Time Adverbs

We use time adverbs such as *afterward*, *after that*, *eventually*, *finally*, *later*, *later on*, *now*, *then*, and *suddenly* as connectors. These connectors usually appear at the beginning of a sentence. When they do, they are immediately followed by a comma.



Then is an exception. It is not followed by a comma.

Our train was running late. **Finally**, it arrived.

We got on board the train. **Then** we realized that we did not have money for the fare.

Exercise 3 Identifying time adverbs

Reread the student essay on pages 61–62. List the time adverbs. On a separate piece of paper, write sentences of your own using the adverbs you found. After you finish, compare your sentences with a partner.

Language and Grammar Focus



Using Subordinating Conjunctions with the Simple Past

We use **subordinating conjunctions** such as *before*, *as soon as*, *after*, *when*, and *while* in complex sentences as connectors. Complex sentences contain a main (independent) clause and a dependent clause.

The main clause expresses the principal and independent idea of the sentence. The dependent clause expresses additional information about the main idea (for example, where or when it happened) but would be meaningless without the main idea.

Dependent time clauses tell us when something happened.



GO ONLINE

Subordinating conjunctions establish the time relationship between the dependent time clause and the main clause in the sentence. The subordinating conjunction starts the dependent clause, but the clauses can come in either order. We use a comma when the time clause comes before the main clause.

time clause

After our parents left the hotel,
Before my **brother** was born,

main clause

we went into the street.
I was an only child.

main clause

We went into the street
I was an only child

time clause

after our parents left the hotel.
before my **brother** was born.

Exercise 4 Using subordinating conjunctions

Combine each pair of sentences into one complex sentence. Use the subordinating conjunctions in parentheses to clarify time relationships.

1. People harvested the apples. They stored them in cellars. (after) After people harvested the apples, they stored them in cellars.

2. People waited a long time for mail. It arrived. (before) _____

3. They saved enough money. They took a great vacation. (as soon as) _____

4. She thought carefully about which gift to buy. She bought the more expensive one. (before) _____

5. She paid for my college. She retired. (after) _____

6. He went straight to his lab. He got up in the morning. (as soon as) _____

Language and Grammar Focus



Adding Details to Essays

Details are facts, examples, illustrations, definitions, and descriptions. They answer *who*, *what*, *why*, *where*, *when*, and *how* questions. We add details to make our writing clearer and more effective.

GENERAL	DETAIL	
	<i>Why?</i>	He was completely exhausted.
He went on vacation.	<i>How?</i>	He traveled first class in an airplane.
	<i>Where?</i>	He traveled to Africa.
	<i>Who?</i>	Although he traveled alone, he met many interesting people.

Exercise 5 Asking detail questions about an outline

Look at this outline and help the writer generate details by writing questions using *who*, *what*, *where*, *why*, or *how*.

The Day I Became a Hero

Hook: When I was eleven, I learned an important lesson about myself in gym class.

1. Questions: What exactly did you learn? Where did you learn it?
Who were you with? How did you learn it?

Thesis statement: All the girls were afraid to jump over the pommel horse, but I was tired of waiting, so I decided to try.

2. Questions: _____

Topic sentence: I decided I wanted to go first.

3. Questions: _____

Supporting detail: I was overjoyed. I had jumped over the pommel horse without falling down.

4. Questions: _____

Conclusion: That day, I learned that I like to do things that are a little bit hard.

5. Questions: _____

Exercise 6 Adding details to your outline

Give the outline for your essay to a partner and have him or her write questions about it for you.

Exercise 7 Writing a first draft



Review your outline. Look at your partner's questions about your outline. Then write the first draft of a narrative essay about a learning experience that changed you or taught you something valuable. Go to the Web to use the Online Writing Tutor.

Exercise 8 Peer editing a first draft

- A. After writing a first draft, it is helpful to get feedback on your ideas. Exchange essays with two other people. For each essay you read, answer the Peer Editor's Questions on a separate piece of paper. Then discuss your responses.



Peer Editor's Questions

1. What is your favorite part of the essay?
2. Are there any *who*, *what*, *where*, or *when* questions that you would like the writer to answer in the background?
3. What is the most important moment in the story? How did it make you feel?
4. What parts of the essay could be supported with more specific details?
5. What parts of the story seemed to have more detail than necessary?
6. What lesson did you learn? Is it the same as or different from the writer's lesson?

Go to the Web to print out a peer editor's worksheet.

- B. Review your feedback and the organization guidelines on page 58. Make notes for your revision. In this step, you may add, remove, or rewrite information to clarify your ideas.



In Writing Process Step 4 you will . . .

- review the past continuous and learn about past time clauses.
- edit your first draft and write a second draft.

Now that you have written a first draft, it is time to edit. Editing involves making changes to your writing to improve it and to correct mistakes.

Language and Grammar Focus



GO ONLINE

Using the Past Continuous in Narrative Essays

In a narrative, you often need to describe actions in progress or to describe background actions.

To form the **past continuous**, use *was/were* and the base form of the verb + *-ing*.

Use the past continuous to talk about activities that were in progress at a specific time in the past. The activities began before the specific time and may also have continued after that time.

At three o'clock we **were walking** home from school. My friend was **riding** his bicycle.

Also use the past continuous to describe background actions.

The sun **was going** down, and the children **were still playing** on the grass.



We don't usually use stative verbs (*be, know, own, mean, seem, understand, love, believe, etc.*) in the past continuous. We use the simple past instead.

I didn't know John then.

X I wasn't knowing John then. (INCORRECT)

AFFIRMATIVE STATEMENTS		
SUBJECT	WAS/WERE	VERB + -ING
I	was	working.
They	were	working.
The sun	was	shining.

NEGATIVE STATEMENTS		
SUBJECT	WAS/WERE + NOT	VERB + -ING
She	wasn't	working.
We	weren't	working.
The phone	wasn't	ringing.

Exercise 1 Identifying background action

Read the paragraph below and underline all the verbs that describe background actions.

My Wedding

I will always remember my wedding day. It was beautiful. I woke up and looked outside. The sun was shining, and the birds were singing. It was as if they were talking to me, telling me to get up. In reality, the radio was playing and my brothers were arguing in the hallway, but it still felt romantic. My dress was hanging on the closet door. My mother was cooking breakfast in the kitchen, and the coffee was brewing. My father was talking on the phone to his brother, and they were discussing who was the better chess player. This was a constant argument between the two of them, but I knew my father was just trying to distract himself because he was feeling nervous.

Exercise 2 Using the past continuous to describe actions in progress

Complete the following texts using the past continuous.

1. I wasn't home yesterday afternoon, I was walking in the park.

2. The president was satisfied. People _____

3. The ship captain was worried. A storm was coming, and _____

4. Thirty years ago, _____

5. During holidays, people _____

Exercise 3 Setting the scene with background details

Continue the stories below. Give background actions using the past continuous to help set the scene. Use the sample paragraph in Exercise 1 as a model.

1. It was an ordinary day at school. _____

2. It was a cold and rainy night. _____



Language and Grammar Focus



Using Subordinating Conjunctions with the Past Continuous

Past time clauses can be used with the past continuous in several ways.

Simultaneous Activities

To describe two simultaneous activities in the past, use the past continuous in both the time clause and the main clause. Use the subordinating conjunctions *when* or *while*.

time clause

main clause

When I **was sleeping**,

the children **were watching** TV.

Interrupted Activities

To describe an interrupted activity, use the past continuous in the time clause, and the simple past in the main clause. Use the subordinating conjunctions *when* or *while*.

time clause

main clause

While I **was waiting** for a bus,

I **heard** a crash.

main clause

time clause

He **saw** the race

when he **was living** in Paris.

Exercise 4 Identifying time clauses with the Past Continuous

Read the following sentences. Write *S* (simultaneous) if the sentence involves two simultaneous actions. Write *I* (interrupted) if the sentence involves one action interrupting another.

- S 1. Our company was developing new products while other companies were focusing on advertising.
- ____ 2. We learned to read while we were living in Argentina.
- ____ 3. The nurse was checking her blood pressure while the doctor was listening to her lungs.
- ____ 4. The manager was flying while her employee was negotiating the deal.
- ____ 5. Aaron called Mansoor while Mansoor was still driving.
- ____ 6. The prime minister was sleeping when he received the call.

Exercise 5 Using subordinating conjunctions

Complete the sentences to create simultaneous or interrupted activities. Use **while** or **when** and the past continuous or the simple past.

1. We were driving down the road when a deer ran out in front of the car.

2. My parents were traveling in Indonesia _____

3. The professor was correcting papers _____

4. Ken was working on the electrical system _____

Exercise 6 Editing a paragraph

Read the paragraph and edit as necessary. There are seven more mistakes.

My Vacation in the Mountains

A few years ago my family went to the mountains to enjoy the beautiful views. In pictures, the mountains were always beautiful. The flowers were blooming, the sun was shining, and the people were smiling; however, our trip to the mountains was a disaster. While we traveled to our destination, the sun disappeared. It was rain. We were stay in a friend's small apartment. Every morning my father checked the sky. Every day it was the same: rainy and cloudy. One day, while my father was look at the clouds, a little sun began to shine through. My father saw the sun as soon as, we were jumping in the car. We drove to Jungfrau Mountain so we could take the tram to the top and enjoy the view. We eagerly got on the tram. It began to climb to the top of the mountain. However, while the tram was climbing, it becoming cloudy. When the tram arrived at the top of the mountain, we were in the middle of a cloud. We could not see anything. Our last day we went to the airport. While the plane taking off, the sun was beginning to shine again.



Exercise 7 Editing your first draft and rewriting

Review your essay for mistakes. Use the checklist below. Then write a final draft.
Go to the Web to use the Online Writing Tutor.



Editor's Checklist

Put a check (✓) as appropriate.

CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

- 1. Does a thesis statement with the main idea appear at the bottom of your first paragraph?
- 2. Does each body paragraph have a clear topic sentence and specific supporting details?
- 3. Do time expressions support the coherence of your essay?
- 4. Does your conclusion explain the outcome and what you learned?

LANGUAGE

- 5. Did you use the correct verb form to indicate sequence and interrupted or simultaneous actions?
- 6. Did you check that stative verbs were used in the past simple?
- 7. Do time adverbs and subordinating conjunctions help the flow of sentences?

Go to the Web to print out a peer editor's worksheet.

In Review you will ...

- review time adverbs and subordinating conjunctions.
- review the simple past and the past continuous.

In Putting It All Together you will review what you learned in this unit.

Exercise 1 Using subordinating conjunctions

Rewrite the sentence(s) as either one or two correctly punctuated sentences.

Use the words in parentheses.

1. Graduation day was very busy we went to the auditorium for the ceremony we came home and prepared the food for the celebration dinner. (after)

2. The chef went to the store to buy all the ingredients she came to the restaurant. (before)

3. I was learning to ride a bike I had a lot of bruises and cuts on my legs. (while)

4. Writing became easier for him he started doing it more frequently. (after)

5. I was in grade school I used to think I would never learn to play tennis. (when)

6. I never enjoyed eating vegetables I was young later on, I started to like the taste. (when)

7. My brother was living at home he taught me math. (while)

8. I was afraid of the water we moved to a house near a lake. (before)

For more information about the study, please contact Dr. John Smith at (555) 123-4567 or via email at john.smith@researchinstitute.org.

9. My parents were visiting Paris they bought a beautiful ring. (while)

For more information about the study, please contact Dr. John Smith at (555) 123-4567 or via email at john.smith@researchinstitute.org.

10. The cowboys were taking the cows to the trains. They sang to the animals to keep them calm. (while)

For more information about the study, please contact Dr. John Smith at (555) 123-4567 or via email at john.smith@researchinstitute.org.

Exercise 2 Reviewing the simple past and past continuous

Write the correct form of the verbs in parentheses.

Last Saturday was an exciting day for me. It was my birthday. I

worked until eight o'clock as usual. As I _____ (walk)

to the bus stop, I _____ (look) for my younger brother.

But that day he wasn't there. I ~~hadn't seen him for a few days~~ (think) it was

(imagine) he was out. When I

4. (arrive) at my house. I

5. _____ (arrive) at my house, I _____
6. _____

(notice) all the lights were turned off. While I _____.

(look for) my front door keys, I _____ (hear) a noise and

suddenly all the lights came on. All my family members were in my

house. When I opened the door, they all yelled, "Surprise!" It was a

surprise celebration for me, and I never suspected a thing!

10. The following table summarizes the results of the study.

Exercise 3 Editing a paragraph

Read the paragraph and edit as necessary. There are six mistakes in verb forms.

Strangers on a Bus

One morning I was wait at the bus stop. I was worried about being late for school, and I was anxiously waiting for the bus to arrive. It was late as usual, and I began to think of what I would tell my teacher. There were several people at the bus stop, and some of them were complaining. When the bus finally came, we all pushed our way on board. Someone folded his umbrella and sprayed water on me. I was felt upset, but fortunately, I got a place next to the window. I had a good view of the sidewalk. People was hurrying along clutching their umbrellas. Then a boy on a bike caught my attention. He was riding beside the bus and wave his arms. I heard passengers behind me shouting to the bus driver, but he refused to stop until we reached the next bus stop. Still, the boy kept riding. He was carried something over his shoulder and shouting. Finally, when we came to the next stop, the boy was running up to the door. I heard an excited conversation. Then the bus driver stood up and announced, "Did anyone lose a briefcase at the last stop?" A woman at the back of the bus shouted, "Oh my! It's mine." She pushed her way to the front and gratefully took the briefcase. She thanked the little boy with enthusiasm. After that, everyone on the bus began talking about what the boy had done, and the crowd of strangers suddenly became friendly.



In **Timed Writing** you will . . .

- practice writing with a time limit.

Practice your test-taking skills with the following practice topic. Read the prompt. Then follow the steps below.

Write a narrative essay about a time when you changed your mind about something. What prompted you to change your mind?

Step 1 BRAINSTORMING: 5 minutes

Write down ideas and vocabulary for your essay on a separate piece of paper. You may want to use the chart on page 57. Remember to include specific details about the experience.

Step 2 OUTLINING: 5 minutes

Write an outline for your essay. Use another piece of paper if necessary.

Introduction (First Paragraph)	
Hook Get the reader interested.	
Background Information Tell who, when, and where.	
Thesis Statement Prepare the reader for the story by focusing on the topic and what you will say about it.	
Body Paragraphs (Middle Paragraphs)	
Topic and Controlling Idea List story details. What happened first? What happened next?	
Topic and Controlling Idea What happened last? How did the story end? How did you or others feel?	
Conclusion (Last Paragraph)	
Story's Importance What did you learn?	

Step 3 WRITING: 40 minutes

Use your brainstorming notes and outline to write your essay on a separate piece of paper.

Step 4 EDITING: 10 minutes

When you have finished your essay, check it for mistakes using this checklist.



Editor's Checklist

Put a check (✓) as appropriate.

- 1. Is the essay correctly formatted with indented paragraphs?
- 2. Does the introduction include a hook, background information, and a thesis statement at the end that focuses the topic and prepares the reader for the main action event?
- 3. Do the paragraphs give enough specific details about the main event?
- 4. Are the details well organized in a clear sequence?
- 5. Does the conclusion show what the writer learned from the experience?
- 6. Does the essay contain a variety of vocabulary?
- 7. Does the sentence structure support the flow of the story with time adverbs and subordinating conjunctions?
- 8. Are all the verbs in the correct form?

Go to the Web to print out a peer editor's worksheet.

Test-Taking Tip

When you finish drafting your essay, read it backwards sentence by sentence. That way you can focus on grammar and not get lost in the ideas. Remember that for a narrative, you'll probably need a lot of past tenses.

Topics for Future Writing

Write a narrative essay on one of the following topics.

Computer Science: Tell the story of how a piece of technology helped you solve a problem. What was your problem? What technology did you use? How did it help? What did you learn?

Engineering: Tell the story of an invention. Who was the inventor? How did he or she get the idea for the invention? What did he or she invent? How was it received by the public? (You may want to do some Internet research.)

Health Science: Tell the story of an illness that you had. What symptoms did you have? What happened to you? How did you recover? What did you learn about the causes, symptoms, and/or treatments?

Literary Analysis: Retell the plot of a story, novel, or movie. Who were the characters? What problems did they face? Describe the events. How were the problems solved? What made the story interesting to you?

Psychology: Tell about a time when someone persuaded you to do something you didn't want to do. How did the person persuade you? How did you feel about it? What did you learn from the experience?