**How to write an anecdote?**

**Anecdotes** are humoristic events, weird occurrences or striking statements which are described in an intriguing story .

An anecdote is often told as a real life occurrence, nevertheless it mostly stays unclear if the story has really happened.

An example

***Elvis has left the building***

*It is a winged expression: 'Elvis has left the building'. But where does this expression come from? Its origins lay in a concert of Elvis Presley almost sixty years ago.*

*During a concert of Elvis in 1957 in Los Angeles he impressed the audience by taking up a toy puppy, which his record label had given to him, and committing activities that were deemed suggestive.*

*Elvis’ hip movements brought the audience, mostly women, in an ecstasy-like state. We are talking about the frumpy 50s here and until then Elvis’ stunt was unheard of. His action brought so much commotion that the fans kept screaming even long after the concert had finished.*

*In an attempt to calm down the audience, the owner of the music hall at a given moment came on stage and spoke the historic words: “Elvis has left the building.”*

*Moreover:  
The police of Los Angeles was alarmed and deployed in full force the day afterwards in the music hall in order to arrest Elvis if he would repeat the same stunt. Elvis’ manager warned him and this time he did not go beyond the stroking of the toy puppy.*

**An anecdote is not a joke.**

An anecdote is a brief story where a certain event, mostly experienced by a (historic) person, is described in a humoristic manner.

Anecdote actually means ‘unpublished work’ and its first use dates back to a collection of spicy stories of Justinianus I, the emperor of the Byzantine empire from 527 AD to 565 AD .

A joke is a story that is meant to make people laugh. Mostly, the story contains a clear punchline.

**How to write a good anecdote:**

A good anecdote is brief, relevant and contains a clear punchline. Humour is permitted but not obligatory.

An anecdote is written simple and often touches simple, everyday subjects and facts.

Thus, keep it simple and brief.

Do **not** use complex vocabulary, poetic language or difficult phrasal constructions. This would only spoil the fun and would make it harder for the reader to get the punchline.

An anecdote can be written or told.

**Some tips to write your anecdote!**

***Structure and lay-out text***

* Open with a catching first sentence! This sentence should make the reader want to read further. (Maybe something more original than the typical “Once upon a time…”)
* Situate the story!
* Don’t make your sentences too long! Long sentences are difficult to read and comprehend. Write your sentences using the active voice! Your story should be read fluently.
* Work chronologically! If you decide to include a flashback make sure to indicate this in the lay-out. You could, for example, write in italics.
* Answer the five Ws: Who? What? Where? When? Why? Their answers will form the core of your story.
* Make sure not to use the same 2 words one directly after another!
* Use the dialogues in order to make your anecdote livelier!

***Language***

* Avoid terminology! Not every reader is able to understand this kind of word usage.
* Avoid abbreviations! Abbreviations can make the text unclear.
* Search for synonyms! This will give more variety to your text by not always using the same words.

***Content text***

* Do not assume your reader has too much foreknowledge!
* Write whatever your senses tell you! Tell the reader about what your smell, feel, hear, taste,… Doing this will permit the reader to better imagine the situation.
* Use ‘graphic’ verbs that contain emotion!   
  For example: I go (normal verb) home 🡪 I stroll (graphic verb) home.

***Control***

* Read your text aloud! By reading aloud what you have written, you can hear if your sentences contain the correct rhythms.
* Ask someone else to read your story! Ask someone that you trust and of whom you know that he/she can make positive and constructive criticisms. Said person obviously should DARE to give remarks. Use those remarks to improve your story, but never forget that it is your story.

***Last but not least***

* Be unique! Do not imitate someone else’s writing style. Stay yourself in everything that you write.
* Have FUN! Enjoy when writing. You will not succeed if you do something against your will.

**Task for the students:**

We ask our students to write a personal anecdote about something that they experienced and adding a humoristic flavour, with a “twist”.

Read the following excellent example:

*When I was a little child we didn’t have much money. My mother was very handy and found a way to obtain food. She previously had received a crocheted bedcover when she had married from her parents. She pulled the wires from the cover and turned the yarn into baby socks. Subsequently, she exchanged those socks for eggs and meat in a farm. The peasant woman told that the baby socks were made with yarn that was so refined, that she wanted more of them. My mother crocheted tens of pairs of socks and exchanged them for food. After a couple of weeks my mother asked the peasant woman why she needed all those socks, because there were plenty of them already. The peasant woman answered that she found the yarn to be so refined that it would be unfortunate to put them on the feet of the baby. She took the yarn from the socks and with it she crocheted… a bedcover.*

**HAVE FUN!!!!**