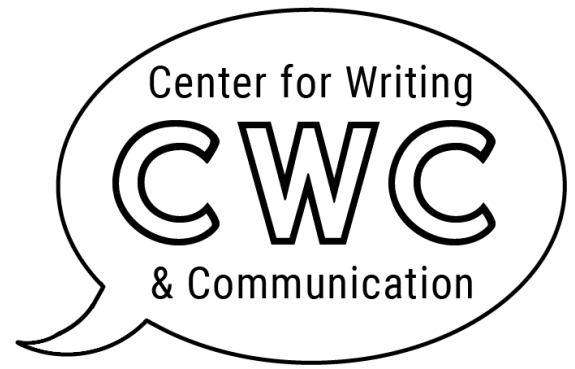


Writing a Narrative



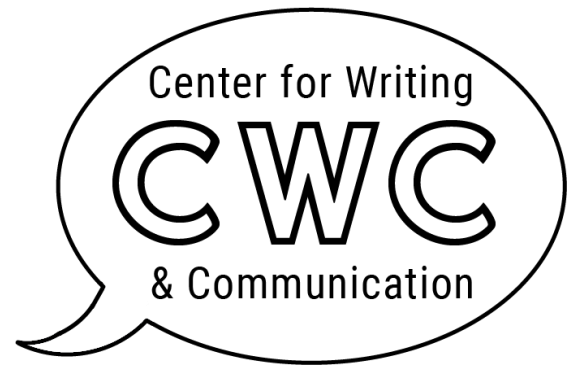
The Process:

- Think of or list major incidents or experiences in your life that stick out in your memory.
 - ◇ Are you able to recall many details from these events? Would you be able to fill a page if you had to freewrite?
 - ◇ Do you feel that you learned something from these events, and if so, which ones had the greatest impact?
 - ◇ Would this experience apply to others if you wrote it honestly and accurately?

- Select which incident or experience you would like to write about.
 - ◇ For what specific reason did you choose this incident? How does it apply to your narrative?
 - ⇒ Did it have the greatest impact on you?
 - ⇒ Are you able to recall the most details?
 - ⇒ Do you feel readers will relate to it?

- Find the relevance in your incident or experience.
 - ◇ What insights or personal awareness did you gain?
 - ◇ Which details contributed to your current knowledge and/or wisdom?
 - ◇ Are you able to formulate an overall theme or thesis? Is it focused enough to carry an entire story?
 - ◇ Are you able to identify the key points in your narrative?

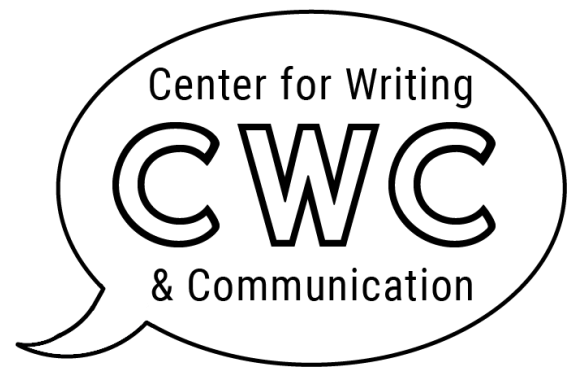
Writing a Narrative



- Recall the physical, emotional, and structural details.
 - ◇ What sights, smells, sounds, and other sensory details can you remember that would help bring this story to life?
 - ⇒ Do you have enough to help create strong imagery, so that the reader will have the clearest picture?
 - ◇ What emotions do you remember feeling that made this incident or experience worth remembering?
 - ⇒ How do they contribute to what you eventually learned?
 - ⇒ How can you communicate these emotions to the reader through your written words?
 - ◇ What other information is important for the story?
 - ⇒ How much background will the reader need?
 - ⇒ Would a linear model work best for your narrative?
 - ⇒ What would constitute the rising action (before the climax)? The falling action (after the climax)?
 - ⇒ How do you plan to write your new insights into the climax of your narrative? Will it be a “moment of epiphany?”

- Conclude your narrative.
 - ◇ Have you included a resolution where you wrap up the narrative and what you learned from your experience?
 - ◇ Have you written your narrative toward the audience, so that they may learn from your experience as well?
 - ⇒ Is this something that you have consistently done throughout your narrative?

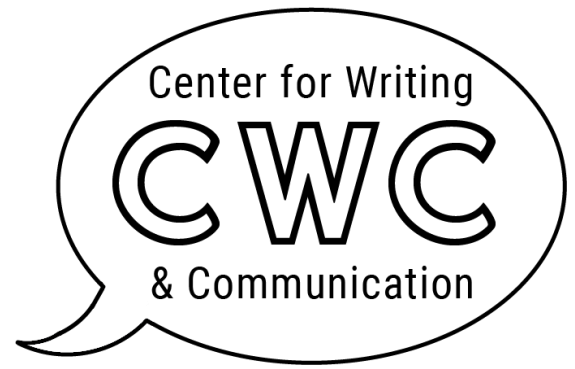
Writing a Narrative



Tips to Keep in Mind:

- Basic narrative structure: before è the event è after/present
 - ◊ Don't "tell" how something tastes, "show" it.
 - ◊ You can "tell" how something affects you now.
 - ◊ Strike the right balance between "showing" and "telling": Recreate the events for the reader, but also include exposition.
- Recognize which details are most relevant. Only include the ones that contribute to the overall narrative and what you learned.
- Points of view should be clear and consistent. Narratives are typically written in first person (I), though third person can be used (he, she, it). Second person (you) is not as common and should probably be avoided, unless there is a very strong reason for it (Ex. "Imagine you are . . ." anecdotes).
- Narratives are stories—your story—and they should include basic story elements: plot, setting, characters, climax, and an ending. Remember to have a main theme, thesis, or focus.
- Your introduction sets the tone for the entire paper, so keep your reader in the loop on how you interpreted the event emotionally.
- Watch for tense confusion (past, present, future). When referring to the past, use the past tense; when writing about yourself in the present (i.e. when talking about what you learned), use present tense.
 - ◊ If you wish to recreate past events as if they were actually happening to you, then make sure that the context is always clear. Otherwise, readers could get lost.

Writing a Narrative



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- Avoid abstract language for describing physical places or people, as it makes it much harder for a reader to relate to something that he or she can't see clearly. Use concrete, sensory details.
 - ◇ Make sure that the setting is clear from the beginning, so that readers can better picture the story. Balance between sensory, physical details and metaphor and imagery.
 - ◇ Long, lengthy descriptions, esp. at the beginning can drag a narrative. Use clear and concise language.
 - Don't be afraid to use your own voice—it brings a unique touch to the paper, makes it more memorable, and keeps it from sounding like a textbook.