# The Narrative Essay

A narrative tells a story. When choosing a topic for a narrative essay, consider a personal experience. The essay should make a point (thesis) and use a story to illustrate that point.

A narrative essay should be all of the following:

- **Unified**: Everything in the essay should refer to the central idea.
- **Consistent in tense**: Do not change tenses unnecessarily (that is, do not switch from past to present, present to past, and so on).
- **Consistent in point of view**: Establish a point of view and stick with it. Using the first person (I, me, or my) or third person (he, she, or they) can be effective; avoid the second person (you).
- **Concise**: Avoid irrelevant information.
- **Specific and detailed**: All colorful, specific details and language to make the story more realistic and interesting.

Additionally, a narrative should contain:

- **Conflict**: Some conflict should exist between a main character and either him - or herself, another character or characters, or an external element. Include dialogue and thoughts when appropriate.

## Organizing a Narrative Essay

The introductory paragraph should do all of the following things:

1. Grab the reader’s attention
2. Tell the reader what the topic is
3. And reveal the author’s attitude toward the topic.

The body paragraph should relate the story in a logical manner. The simplest way to organize the body is chronologically. Tell it as it happened. In organizing a series of events, use paragraph divisions to separate jumps in time, place, or direction; provide transitions between paragraphs to help the reader follow these changes and the logical connections between them.

The conclusion should remind the reader of the point(s) made in the introduction, and should re-state the central thesis, though more strongly the second time around.

For further information, see Skwire’s *Writing With a Thesis* (1999) and Donald et al.’s *Writing Clear Essays* (1995).