

WRITING TO NARRATE A STORY

What Is Narrative Writing?

Narrative writing is writing that tells a story, either factual or make-believe. **Personal narratives**, for example, recount actual events in the writer's life. **Fictional narratives**, on the other hand, are created in the writer's imagination.

Narrative Structure

All narratives have three main parts: the **beginning**, the **middle** and the **ending**.

The Beginning

- ▶ Introduces the **characters** in the story. They can be people, talking animals or imaginary creatures. Most narratives centre on one **main character**. In a personal narrative, the writer is the main character. The other characters work with or against the main character.
- ▶ Describes the **setting**, or time and place of the story.
- ▶ States a **problem** or conflict that the main character faces.

The Middle

- ▶ Develops the **plot**, or the events that make up the action of the story. The plot events show how the characters deal with the problem.
- ▶ Presents the plot events in an order leading to a turning point, or **climax**. After the climax is reached, the problem will soon be resolved.
- ▶ Uses descriptive details and dialogue to liven up characters and events.

The Ending

- ▶ Tells the **resolution**, or how the problem is finally solved or settled.
- ▶ States the **outcome**, or what happens after the problem has been resolved. Ties up any loose ends.

Types of Narratives

Narratives come in several types, or **genres**. Each genre has its own unique features.

NARRATIVE GENRES	USUAL CHARACTERS	POSSIBLE SETTINGS	TYPICAL ELEMENTS
Adventures are exciting stories with fast action.	heroes or heroines, villains, explorers, spies, astronauts, scientists, sailors, pirates	a dangerous place, such as isolated woods, a jungle, a desert, a mountain, the ocean or outer space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Main character faces an extremely dangerous or difficult situation. ■ Wit, physical skills and a will to survive help the main character succeed.
Fables are stories that teach a lesson or moral.	animals that speak and act like humans	may or may not be described; does not affect the plot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Through the words and actions of the animals, the story shows how foolish or wise people can be. ■ Often has a lot of dialogue. ■ One animal usually outwits another animal.
Fantasy stories have characters, settings and plots that are not found in the real world.	strange beings or creatures, talking animals, toys or other objects that come alive	an imaginary place in the past, present or future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Actions and descriptions may be exaggerated to make them more dramatic. ■ Time travel is often part of the plot.
Folktales are stories from different cultures that were passed on orally long before they were ever written down.	ordinary people, talking animals, beings with extraordinary powers	some time in the past, often in a faraway land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The stories helped people understand the customs and values of their culture. ■ A lesson about human nature may be told. Kind, honest and hardworking characters are rewarded. Selfish, corrupt and lazy characters are punished.
Historical fiction stories recreate a real period in history with invented characters and events.	people who actually lived during that historical period and invented characters who behave like people of that period	an authentic time and place in history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Historical facts blend with fictional details. ■ Details should be consistent with that period in history. ■ The story is set in the past, but the themes are familiar to readers of the present.
Legends are stories based on people and events from the past but are not quite true.	kings and queens, heroes and heroines	a particular time and place in the past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The truth is stretched a lot. ■ False details make the main character seem more remarkable than that person ever was or could ever be.

NARRATIVE GENRES	USUAL CHARACTERS	POSSIBLE SETTINGS	TYPICAL ELEMENTS
<p>Mysteries are stories about a crime, a bizarre event or some other puzzle that needs to be solved.</p>	<p>victim, missing person, criminal, suspects, witnesses, detective</p>	<p>a time or place that fits the mood of the story; weather often sets the mood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Suspense is a key element, with clues laid out to be fit together by the detective. ■ A twist late in the plot may point to a new suspect. ■ The mystery is always solved, but the solution may be a surprise.
<p>Myths are stories from the past that explain some mystery of life or nature.</p>	<p>gods and goddesses, imaginary creatures, people with superhuman powers</p>	<p>ancient times; some place in the natural world, in the heavens or in the underworld</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Myths helped ancient people understand human behaviour and natural phenomena. ■ The stories often answer questions about origins, such as <i>How was the world created? Where did fire come from? Why do clouds exist?</i>
<p>Personal narratives are true stories based on experiences in the writer's life.</p>	<p>the writer and the other people or animals who shared the experience with the writer</p>	<p>the time and place in which the actual events happened</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The story is told from the writer's point of view, using the pronouns <i>I, me, we</i> and <i>us</i>. ■ The writer's thoughts and feelings are as important as details describing the events.
<p>Realistic stories are based on people and events that are true to life.</p>	<p>ordinary people who behave and speak in normal ways</p>	<p>any place in the real world during the present or recent past</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The characters' concerns are those of regular people. ■ Every part must be possible and believable, though the story is made up.
<p>Science fiction stories are based on real or imagined ideas in science.</p>	<p>aliens, androids, bionic people, clones, scientists, space explorers</p>	<p>other planets, below Earth or under the sea, a future city, a lost world, a spaceship or space colony</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Humans explore distant worlds or go backward or forward in time. ■ The ideas suggest not what is possible today but what might be feasible in the future.
<p>Tall tales are highly exaggerated and humorous stories about early Australians.</p>	<p>actual people from Australian history or heroes and heroines who are completely imaginary</p>	<p>the outback, mostly during the 1800s when Australia was still developing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Characters are larger than life, possessing extraordinary strength or courage. ■ Historical facts are woven in with improbable details. ■ Characters often wrestle with nature.

Avoid Run-on and Rambling Sentences

Avoid long, confusing sentences that run on or ramble. A **run-on sentence** has two or more independent clauses but no punctuation to separate them. A **rambling sentence** strings together several independent clauses with conjunctions such as *and*, *but* or *or*.

There are three ways to **correct a run-on sentence**.

1. Break it into **simple sentences**, using the appropriate punctuation and capitalisation.
2. Create a **compound sentence**, using a *comma* followed by a *conjunction*.
3. Create a **compound sentence**, using a *semicolon*.

Run-on Sentence: Samuel Clemens was a popular author his pen name was Mark Twain.

Samuel Clemens was a popular author. His pen name was Mark Twain.

Samuel Clemens was a popular author, and his pen name was Mark Twain.

Samuel Clemens was a popular author; his pen name was Mark Twain.

You can also **correct a rambling sentence** by creating separate sentences. The sentences may be **simple**, **compound** or **complex**. (To form a complex sentence, change one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause and add it to another independent clause.)

Rambling Sentence: Jazz is a unique form of music and many people enjoy it and jazz can be brassy and it can also be mellow.

Jazz is a special kind of music. Many people enjoy it. Jazz can be brassy. It can also be mellow.

Jazz is a special kind of music, and many people enjoy it. Jazz can be brassy, or it can be mellow.

Jazz is a special kind of music that can be brassy or mellow. Many people enjoy it.

Vary Sentences

To make your writing more effective and lively, vary your sentences. Here are some suggestions:

1. Include questions, commands and exclamations as well as statements.
2. Don't always start with the subject of the sentence. Begin some sentences with a transition (see page 20) or a modifier, such as an adverb phrase or clause.
3. Put the verb before the subject occasionally.
4. Use a combination of short simple sentences and longer compound or complex sentences.
5. Create some sentences with compound subjects or compound predicates.

Develop Strong Paragraphs

Paragraphs are the building blocks of most forms of writing. Every paragraph presents one **main idea**, which is generally stated in a **topic sentence**. The topic sentence may be anywhere in the paragraph, but it is usually at the beginning or at the end. **Detail sentences** develop the main idea by using sensory words, facts, examples, comparisons, contrasts, reasons and opinions. Transition words and phrases help to link the detail sentences within a paragraph. Transitions also help ideas flow smoothly from one paragraph to the next. (See page 20.)

Many paragraphs begin with one or two sentences that help pull in readers. The lead might be an interesting question, a surprising fact or an inspiring quotation.

PROOFREADING

Once you have a revised draft that says exactly what you mean, the final step is **proofreading**. When you proofread, you look for errors in word use, sentence structure, capitalisation and punctuation. Use the checklist below to guide you.

Proofreading Checklist

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I used precise and effective words. | <input type="checkbox"/> I did not add unnecessary words or details. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I wrote clear and complete sentences. | <input type="checkbox"/> I used correct word forms. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I began a new paragraph for each change of idea or speaker. | <input type="checkbox"/> I used the right words in the right places. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I indented every paragraph. | <input type="checkbox"/> I made sure verbs agree with their subjects. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I used transitions to connect ideas. | <input type="checkbox"/> I used capitalisation and punctuation correctly. |

Mark any corrections that need to be made, using the proofreading symbols below.

SYMBOLS	MEANINGS	EXAMPLES
	Change a small letter to a capital letter.	<u>capital</u> ize the first letter.
	Change a capital letter to a small letter.	Make a S mall L etter.
	Begin a new paragraph.	¶ Start a new paragraph when the main idea changes.
	Delete this letter, word, punctuation mark or sentence.	Take out any extra or incorrect letters, words words, punctuation marks or sentences.
	Add a missing letter or word.	Put in ^{one} or more words or letter ^s
	Transpose the letters or words.	Letters or words ^{tr} be ^{tr} should in the correct order.
	Let it stand.	Don't delete this word. (STET)
	Insert a comma.	Ann _^ put a comma here _^ please.
	Insert a full stop.	This is the end ○
	Insert a semicolon.	Join these clauses _^ insert a semicolon.
	Insert a question mark.	Where does the question mark go?
	Insert an apostrophe.	Abe _^ 's name needs an apostrophe.
	Insert quotation marks.	Please don't forget the quotation marks, _^ said Mrs _^ Speaks.