

What Is Narrative Writing?

Narrative writing is writing that tells a story. Some narratives are true, or nonfictional. **Personal narratives**, for example, tell about something that really happened in the writer's life. Other narratives are made up, or fictional. **Fictional narratives** are created in the writer's imagination.

The Main Parts of a Narrative

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.
- ▶ Describes the **setting**, or where and when the story happens.
- ▶ States a **problem** that the main character faces. How the character deals with this problem will drive the story forward.

The Middle

- ▶ Develops the **plot**, or action, of the story.
- ▶ Presents events that show what the main character does to solve the problem.

The Ending

- ▶ Tells the **solution**, or how the problem is finally cleared up.
- ▶ Ties up loose ends. Answers questions that came up during the story.

Kinds of Narratives

There are several kinds of narratives. Each kind has its own unique features.

KINDS OF NARRATIVES	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 a mountain, woods, a jungle, a desert, 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 overcome the problem.
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.
Fairy tales are stories in which impossible things happen.	kings, queens, princes, princesses, peasants, giants, elves, beings with unusual powers, animals that talk or change to human form	“once upon a time in a land far, far away”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Main character usually gets help from an object or a being with unusual powers. ■ Main character usually lives “happily ever after”.
Fantasy stories have characters, settings and plots that are not found in the real world.	unusual 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 exciting. ■ Characters may travel backward or forward in time.
Folktales are stories from different cultures that were passed on by storytellers and much later written down.	ordinary people, talking animals, beings with unusual powers	some time in the past, often in a faraway land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A lesson about human nature may be told. ■ Good triumphs over evil. ■ Kind, honest and sensible characters are rewarded. Selfish, lazy and greedy characters are punished.

KINDS OF NARRATIVES	USUAL CHARACTERS	POSSIBLE SETTINGS	TYPICAL ELEMENTS
<p>Mysteries are stories about a crime, a strange 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 important</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Suspense is a key element. ■ Clues are laid out for the detective to fit together. ■ A twist late in the plot may point to a new suspect. ■ Someone always solves the mystery, but the solution may be a surprise.
<p>Myths are stories that explain some mystery of life or nature.</p>	<p>gods and goddesses, imaginary creatures, human beings with extraordinary powers</p>	<p>an unknown time long ago; some place in nature, in the heavens or in the underworld</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Myths helped ancient people understand their actions and surroundings. ■ The stories answer questions such as <i>How was the world created? Where did fire come from? Why is there good and evil?</i>
<p>Personal narratives are true stories based on experiences in your life.</p>	<p>you and the other people or animals who shared the experience with you</p>	<p>the time and place in which the actual events happened</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ You tell the story from your point of view, using the pronouns <i>I, me</i> and <i>my</i>. ■ Events should be in order. ■ Thoughts and feelings are important as well as events.
<p>Realistic stories are about ordinary people and situations that could actually happen.</p>	<p>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"> ■ Problems are the concerns of people like ourselves. ■ 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, space explorers, scientists, robots</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 true today but what might be possible in the future.

Vary Sentences

To make your writing more interesting, vary your sentences. Most of your sentences will probably be *statements*, but make sure that you also include some *questions*, *commands* and *exclamations*.

Penguins don't fly like most other birds. (*statement*)

Why don't penguins fly? (*question*)

Read on to learn more about penguins. (*command*)

Penguins are incredible swimmers! (*exclamation*)

Begin your sentences in different ways. Don't always start with the subject of the sentence (the noun or pronoun that tells *whom* or *what* the sentence is about). Begin some sentences with transitions such as *for example*, *sometimes* or *however*. (See page 20 for more transition words and phrases.) Adverbs and other phrases that tell *how*, *when* or *where* also make good beginnings.

Sentences should also have different lengths. Too many short sentences can make your writing seem choppy. If two short sentences have related ideas, turn them into one compound sentence. Use the conjunction *and*, *but* or *or* to join the two sentences and place a comma (,) before the conjunction. Also be careful about having your sentences get too long. Read your sentences aloud. If you find you need an extra breath, look for ways to shorten the sentences.

Develop Strong Paragraphs

Paragraphs are the building blocks of a piece of writing. In each paragraph, the writer develops one **main idea**. When the writer presents a new idea, a new paragraph begins. To help readers recognise a change of idea, the writer indents the first line of the new paragraph.

Main ideas don't appear alone, however. A paragraph usually has several sentences that tell more about the main idea. These sentences are called **details**. They can be descriptions, reasons, facts or examples. All of the details must work together to support the main idea. If a detail isn't clear or doesn't relate to the idea, it should be removed. In addition, the details must be put in an order that makes sense.

PUNCTUATION RULES

Without punctuation, readers would have difficulty understanding what writers have written. Punctuation helps readers know where to pause in sentences or where a complete thought begins and ends. So, give your readers a break. Always use the correct punctuation.

End Punctuation

- Use a **full stop** (.) at the end of a *statement* or *command*.

The phone is ringing. (*statement*)
Please answer the phone. (*command*)

- Use a **question mark** (?) at the end of a *question*.

How old will you be on your next birthday?

- When a *quotation* is a *question*, use a **question mark** (?) *after the last word and before the closing quotation mark*.

“Can you come to my house after school?” asked Jillian.
Nora asked, “What time should I be there?”

- Use an **exclamation point** (!) at the end of an *exclamation* showing strong feeling.

I can't believe that I won the game!

- When a *quotation* is an *exclamation*, use an **exclamation point** (!) *after the last word and before the closing quotation mark*.

“Look at that strange object in the sky!” Robert exclaimed.
Billy shouted, “That's a blimp!”

- Use an **exclamation point** (!) after an *interjection*. An interjection is a word that shows surprise, anger or some other sudden feeling.

Wow! You got here fast. Oh! You surprised me.