# Narrative Essay

Narration tells a story presenting events in an orderly, logical sequence. Narratives, like other types of writing, need rich, specific details if they are to be convincing. Each detail should help to create a picture for the reader; even exact times, dates, and geographical locations can be helpful. Look, for example, at the following paragraph from the essay “My Mother Never Worked.”

In the winter she sewed night after night, endlessly, begging cast-off clothing from relatives, ripping apart coats, dresses, blouses, and trousers to remake them to fit her four daughters and son. Every morning and every evening she milked cows, fed pigs and calves, cared for chickens, picked eggs, cooked meals, washed dishes, scrubbed floors, and tended and loved her children. In the spring she planted a garden once more, dragging pails of water to nourish and sustain the vegetables for the family. In 1936 she lost a baby in her sixth month.

In the paragraph above, the list of details gives the narrative authenticity and makes it convincing. The central figure is a busy, productive woman, and readers know this because they are presented with an exhaustive catalog of her activities.

Many narratives present events in exact order in which they occurred, moving from first event to last. Whether or not you follow a strict chronological order depends on the purpose of your narrative.

When you write a narrative, you must be careful to keep verb tenses consistent and accurate so your readers can follow the sequence of events. Naturally, you must change shift tenses to reflect an actual time shift in your narrative.

Like other essays, narratives have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. If your essay’s thesis is explicitly stated, it will, in most cases, appear in the introduction. The body of your essay will recount the events that make up your narrative, following a clear and orderly plan. Finally, the conclusion will give your readers the sense that your story is complete.