

## **The Narrative paragraph**

### **1. Definition**

The narrative paragraph tells a story or relates an event usually in chronological order. Narratives have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Any time you go to a movie or read a fiction book, you are looking at a narrative. Narrative paragraphs often describe events from the writer's life.

### **2. Structure of a Narrative Paragraph**

#### **2.1. The topic sentence**

The topic sentence of a narrative paragraph-usually the first sentence-gives background information about the action that is going to happen in the story. The background sentence is not usually the beginning of the story-it sets up the story. The writer introduces the characters and prepares readers for the action that will come. This sentence is the beginning of the paragraph, but it is not usually the beginning of the story.

#### **2.2. Supporting Sentences**

The supporting sentences present the action which is divided into beginning, middle and end.

#### **2.3. The Concluding Sentence**

The concluding sentence gives an opinion about the story: How the writer feels about it. It might give insight into how the event affects the narrator in the present or since that event.

### **Beginning, Middle, and End**

Every narrative paragraph has a beginning, middle, and an end. Read this example and study the questions and answers.

#### **Paragraph 1**

I never thought I could do it, but I finally conquered my fear of public speaking. My English teacher gave the assignment (to speak for three minutes in front of

my class) at the beginning of the semester, and I worried about it for two months. I have always been afraid of making a speech in public. I wrote all of my ideas on note cards. I practiced my speech with my notes in front of a mirror, in front of my dog, and in front of my husband. Would I be able to make my speech in front of my class? When the day of my speech came, I was ready. As I reached the podium, I looked at my audience and smiled. Then I looked down at my note cards. At that moment, I realized that I had the wrong information. These were the notes for my biology test, not the information about my speech! I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. Suddenly, I began the speech. To my surprise, the words flowed from my mouth. Three minutes later, it was over. Everyone applauded my speech that day, and I left the podium feeling like a winner.

1. What is the topic sentence?

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2. What is the beginning of the main action or problem in this narrative paragraph?

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3. What was the main action or problem? What happened

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The end of the story gives the final action or result. If there is a problem or conflict in the story, the solution is presented here.

4. Does the story have a happy or a sad ending? Does the author learn anything from this experience?

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## **Paragraph2**

### **My Macy's Nightmare**

I will never forget the first time I got lost in New York City. I was traveling with my parents during summer vacation. We were in Macy's department store, and I was so excited to see such a huge place. Suddenly, I turned around to ask

my mom something, but she was gone! I began crying and screaming at the top of my lungs. A salesclerk came up to me and asked if I was okay. She got on the public address (P.A.) system and notified the customers that a little boy with blue jeans and a red cap was lost. Two minutes later my mom and dad came running toward me. We all cried and hugged each other. Every time that I see a Macy's, I am reminded of that terrified boy.

at the top of my lungs: very loud

notified: gave information

1. What is the topic sentence of this paragraph?
2. Where does the story happen?
3. How old do you think the boy was?
4. What is the beginning of the story? (Circle one.)
  - a. He was in a large New York department store.
  - b. He got separated from his parents.

What is the middle of the story? (Circle one.)

- a. He screamed and cried.
- b. He got separated from his parents.

What is the end of the story? (Circle one.)

- a. His parents found him.
- b. The size of the store excited him

### **Paragraph 3**

These sentences form a narrative of a personal experience with death. Read" the sentences and number them from 1 to 7 to indicate the best order.

a. . . .At 7:18 the next morning, a severe earthquake measuring 8.1 on the Richter scale hit Mexico City. I was asleep, but the violent side-to-side movement of my bed from side to side woke me up. Then I could hear the rumble of the building as it was shaking.

b. ....As I was trying to stand up, I could hear the stucco walls of the building cracking. I was on the third floor of a six-story building, and I thought the building was going to collapse. I really believed that I was going to die.

c. ....I flew to Mexico City on September 17. The first two days were uneventful.

d. ....My trip to Mexico City in September 1985 was not my first visit there, but this unforgettable trip helped me realize something about life.

f.....I visited a few friends and did a little sightseeing. On the evening of the eighteenth, I had a late dinner with some friends that I had not seen in several years. After a very peaceful evening, I returned to my hotel and quickly fell asleep.

f.....In the end, approximately 5,000 people died in this terrible tragedy, but I was lucky enough not to be among them. This unexpected disaster taught me that life can be over at any minute, so it is important for us to live every day as if it is our last.

g.....When I looked at my room, I could see that the floor was moving up and down like water in the ocean. Because the doorway is often the strongest part of a building, I tried to stand up in the doorway of the bedroom.

Now copy the sentences above in the best order for a narrative paragraph.

Background.....  
Information .....  
(topic sentence)

Beginning of story.....

Middle of story.....

End of story.....

## 2. Verb Tense Consistency

When writers tell a story, they usually use the past tense. Consistency in verb tense means that all the verbs are in the same tense. Be careful not to switch tenses when you write a narrative paragraph.

Example

Read the following narrative paragraph. Underline all the verbs. Then make corrections so that ALL the verbs are in the past tense.

### Paragraph 4

#### My First Job

The happiest day of my life is when I get my first job last year. After college, I try and try for six months to get work with an advertising firm, but my luck is bad. Finally, one day while I was eating a sandwich in a downtown coffee shop, my luck will begin to change. A young woman who was sitting next to me asks if she could read my newspaper. I say okay, and we start talking. She begins to tell me that she is an executive in a huge advertising company and is looking for an assistant. I will tell her that I am very interested in mass communications and study it for four years at the university. She gives me her business card, and within one week, I am her administrative assistant. It is the best lunch of my life!

**Assignment**

Following the writing process, write a paragraph about an experience that had a great impact on your life.

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