

# Write a Narrative

## 1 GETTING THE IDEA

**Narrative writing** is writing that develops real or imagined experiences to entertain a reader. Some narratives are fictional, while others tell true stories, but all narratives have characters, a setting, a plot, and a point of view. To plan your narrative, think about these elements first.

### **Choose a Setting, Characters, and a Point of View**

The **setting** provides a context, or backdrop, for the events that will occur in the narrative. The setting should match the kind of story you're telling. For example, a science fiction story might be set on a distant planet in the future.

The **characters** will carry out the action in your narrative. You can develop your characters through what they say, do, and think. Their actions and words both reveal what they're like and help to build the narrative's plot.

The **point of view** of your story, or who tells it, affects how much the reader will know about different characters and events. You might write in the first person if you want to explore the thoughts, feelings, and unique voice of a single character. If you'd like to present the points of view of many characters, third-person omniscient might be a better choice.

### **Plan Out the Plot with a Story Map**

To plan the **plot**, or the events in your story, it can help to make an outline of what will happen in the beginning, middle, and end of the story. The beginning of the story is where a writer introduces the plot conflict. The author can then use the events of the story to have the characters work through the conflict. The conclusion, or end of your story, will show how the conflict is resolved. The following story outline shows one way to organize plot details.

**Conflict:** Alicia finds a beautiful bracelet and wants to keep it.

**Event 1:** Alicia finds a bracelet on the sidewalk and picks it up. She looks around, but there's nobody there. She puts the bracelet on her wrist and continues home.

**Event 2:** Alicia's mother notices the bracelet and is concerned because it looks expensive. When Alicia admits that she found it, they return it at the police station.

**Conclusion:** The police locate the owner, who gives Alicia a reward for returning it. Alicia buys herself a bracelet with the reward money.

## Write Your Narrative Draft

The goal when writing your narrative is to orient your readers at the beginning and then keep them engaged until the end. You can use the following techniques to keep your writing clear and interesting.

**Establish a Context and Point of View** When you establish a **context**, you pull your readers into the world of your story, which includes a setting and characters. You introduce a narrator with a clear point of view to act as a guide for your readers. The reader must understand these narrative elements right away so the story events that follow will make sense.

To get your readers' attention, you might start in the middle of the action. Or you could start with a gripping description of the setting or characters. Introducing the conflict early keeps your readers engaged to find out how it's resolved.

**Organize a Well-Structured Event Sequence** Once you've gotten your readers' attention, you need to be sure the event sequence that follows unfolds in a logical way, so they can follow what happens.

- **Transitional words** and phrases help you convey sequence, show time passing, or change the setting. Here are some examples: *then* (sequence), *arriving at school* (changes setting), *the following week* (time passing).
- Pay attention to **pacing**, or how quickly the story moves. Long sentences full of description tend to move slowly, while short, action-packed sentences move quickly. As the writer, you can slow down or speed up the pacing to reflect story events. For example, a character description might move more slowly than a tense, suspenseful part.
- The sequence of events should lead your characters to a **resolution** of the story's conflict. If an event doesn't drive the plot forward, you may not need it.
- Your **conclusion** should resolve the story's conflict and end the story in a satisfying way that makes sense with events that have already occurred. It may also serve as a time to reflect on, or hint at, the story's themes.

**Add Description and Dialogue** **Description** gives the details of your story and creates a clear picture for your reader. **Precise language** captures the action, while **sensory details** describe how things look, feel, taste, smell, and sound. However, make sure you don't get lost in the details; your descriptions should be relevant to the story. For example, a description of someone baking makes sense in a story about cooking, while a description of a football game makes sense in a story about football.

Let some of your story come out in the **dialogue**. Good dialogue gives each of your characters a unique voice and helps readers get to know them better.