

Personal Writing Guide



“Never let the truth get in the way of a good story”
(Mark Twain).

Make it impossible for your reader to stop reading. It's your story!

Topic

Often, you are asked to write about a person, a place, a thing or an experience that has been significant for you.

Check out these examples:

- ◆ Write about a person who has had a positive impact on your life.
- ◆ Write about the best gift you have ever received.
- ◆ Write about a place that holds a special memory for you.
- ◆ Write about a time when you experienced success.

Your first paragraph

Start by setting the scene:

- ◆ Use the weather to create the mood
- ◆ Describe the buildings, landscape, room, city, etc to let the reader know where you are
- ◆ By the end of the paragraph, link to the task
- ◆ Invite the reader in to your journey

Check out this example:

Steam slithered up from the ground in snake-like shapes. The frost glimmered in the morning sun, sparkling with mischief. My breath froze in plumes and clouds in front of my face, distracting me for a moment from the fear that rose in me like the freezing fog. And me? Well, I cautiously walked towards the huge, grey building which held my future in its hands. This building, and the people in it, might make my life complete, or might crush my dreams. Why was I standing alone in a car park on an icy Saturday morning staring at a school? It was day of my grade 3 piano exam of course! Reader, join me as I walk down memory lane to remember the most significant moment in my journey towards musical success!

The main paragraphs of your task

- ◆ Start with a topic sentence to sum up what the paragraph is about
- ◆ Tell your story in a lively, fun and exciting way (see next page for more!). Take it paragraph by paragraph through the whole story.
- ◆ Write as if you have a circle of friends around you and you are trying to hold their attention.

Your final paragraph

- ◆ Your story has been told; now it's time to reflect on the task. Try one of these:

Looking back now, ...

This experience has taught me ...

Now I know that I can ...

You might be thinking that this story isn't a big deal. Well, let me tell you ...

Turn over for **top tips!**



Top Tips for Success in Personal Writing

Use language devices:

- ◆ adjectives to appeal to the sense of sight, sound, touch, taste, smell
- ◆ similes and metaphors to paint a picture
- ◆ personification to make an object seem bigger, scarier, friendlier, etc
- ◆ pathetic fallacy to make the weather match the mood
- ◆ onomatopoeia and alliteration to add lively sound effects

Expand your vocabulary

- ◆ when you practise, use a thesaurus to find better words and try to learn them as you go
- ◆ avoid dull language choices such as 'said', 'walked' or 'nice'. Instead of 'said' try 'demanded' or 'whispered' or 'bellowed'. Instead of 'nice' say 'enjoyable' or 'pleasant' or 'unbelievably, astoundingly awesome'!
- ◆ be ambitious with your word choices, even if you aren't 100% sure how to spell it. Better to try it than not to try it.

Vary your sentences

Use the full range of sentence structures, lengths, types and punctuation marks to show off your skills.

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- ◆ Simple sentences have one action: I walked slowly.
- ◆ Compound sentences join clauses with conjunctions:
I walked slowly but I knew I would eventually face my fear.
- ◆ Complex sentences contain ideas that are dependent on each other:
If I walk slowly, I won't have to face my fear straight away.
- ◆ Use long sentences with lots of connected ideas to create flow and detail, and then mix these up with short snappy sentences for impact.
- ◆ Use a mix of all four types of sentences:
 - Commands (e.g. Shut the door.)
 - Questions (e.g. Who shut the door?)
 - Statements (e.g. I will shut the door.)
 - Exclamations (e.g. Ouch!)

And lastly, **proof read** your work! You can make significant improvements to your score by fixing errors, especially by checking your apostrophes, full stops, capital letters and spelling of commonly used words.

