**Title of assignment: Personal Narrative Essay**

**Length [to be filled out by instructor]: 2-4 pages of typed, double- spaced text**

**Due date [to be filled out by instructor]: First quarter**

**Description of assignment:**

Write a personal narrative essay on one of the approved topics below. The essay must tell a clear story about a real experience. Use narration and description in the essay. Your tone should be conversational; tell the story as if you were telling it to a close friend. The essay must be in MLA format with double spacing and Times New Roman 12-point font. The length of the essay should be between 2 and 4 full pages of text. Your essay should be free of grammar and spelling errors.

**Goal of assignment:**

Tell an engaging true story that has a clear purpose (thesis) and a believable narrator.

**Skills we will work on with this paper:**

• narration

• description

• dialogue (if needed)

• chronological organization

**Suggestions for topics:**

• a story from your childhood

• a significant accomplishment or overcoming a challenge

• a time when you experienced something new/for the first time

• a memory with the most influential/important person in your life

• a funny story that happened to you

• a time when you participated in an extracurricular activity/hobby

• a memorable vacation/event with family or friends

• a story about the most memorable gift you ever received

• a holiday and how you celebrate it

• a time you were greatly inspired

• a moment when you discovered one of your favorite things

• for all other topics, get instructor approval

**Rubric [with percentage breakdown for different aspects of evaluation/grade (%)]:**

Content = 30%

A: 30-27 points

Paper is creative and original

Student has clearly followed and met the assignment guidelines

B: 26-23 points

Paper is somewhat creative and original

Student has mostly followed and met the assignment guidelines

C: 22-19 points

Paper is unoriginal and ideas are obvious or general

Student has followed and met basic assignment guidelines

D: 18-15 points

Paper is unoriginal and ideas are obvious or general

Student has not followed and met the basic assignment

guidelines

F: 14-0 points

Paper contains few complete ideas

Student has not followed and met most of the basic assignment

Guidelines

Development = 30%

A: 30-27 points

Tone enhances the subject, conveys the writer’s attitude, and suits the audience

B: 26-23 points

Tone mostly fits the subject, the writer’s attitude is somewhat clear, and the tone is mostly suitable for the audience

C: 22-19 points

Tone is acceptable for the subject, writer’s attitude is not clear or consistent, and the tone may or may not be suitable for the audience

D: 18-15 points

Tone is not consistent with the subject, writer’s attitude is indeterminate, and tone is not appropriate for the audience

F: 14-0 points

Tone is not clear at all or does not make sense for the subject, writer’s attitude is indeterminate, and the tone risks disengaging the audience.

Structure = 20%

A: 20-18 points

Essay has a logical order and a clear sense of flow

Introduction is engaging, paragraphs are idea-centered, and

transitions are smooth

B: 17-16 points

Essay has a somewhat logical order and some sense of flow

Introduction is mostly engaging, paragraphs are mostly adhere to

their topics, and transitions are identifiable

C: 15-14 points

Essay does not have a logical order, though some order is

obvious

Introduction offers little insight, paragraphs stray off topic, and transitions can sometimes be evident

D:13-11 points

Essay structure seems random or chaotic, paragraphs lack

development, and transitions are missing or misleading

F: 10-0 points

Essay does not have any clear structure, paragraphs are not

developed, transitions are missing or misleading

Format = 10%

A: 10-9 points

Proper MLA format is evident

B: 8-7 points

Paper is mostly formatted correctly, but may contain minor errors

C: 6-5 points

Text contains greater than 3 kinds of formatting errors

D: 4-3 points

Formatting is problematic and has several major errors

F: 2-0 points

Formatting does not follow assignment guidelines

Grammar = 10%

A: 10-9 points

Paper has been carefully edited and contains only minor grammatical and/or spelling errors

B: 8-7 points

Paper has been edited, but may contain 4-7 errors

C: 6-5 points

Careless proofreading is evident

Text contains between 8-15 errors

D: 4-3 points

Little evidence of proofreading

Text contains between 16-30 errors

F: 2-0

No evidence of proofreading

Text has greater than 30 errors

**Possibilities (the best essays do this):**

Personal narratives based on the author’s experience are usually written in the first-person using the “I” pronoun. Personal narratives based on others’ experience are usually written in the third-person using “he”, “she”, or “they” pronouns. Personal narratives are usually written in the past tense, but they can be written in the present tense. Successful narratives are often written in chronological order with a beginning, a middle, and an end. This helps readers develop a sense of time in the story. Many writers use dialogue to show how the narrator and other characters are feeling about the events that are unfolding.

Some stories are told by focusing on scene. This means the author will provide details as vividly and precisely as if he or she is there (imagine if the story is a movie and the reader is watching). Other stories might be told by focusing on summary. This means the author will tell the essentials of what happened rather than providing great details about people and their surroundings. Either technique can be used to write a compelling narrative.

Writers should begin by selecting a topic and answering the 5 W’s and the H about the topic: What happened? Who took part? When? Where? Why did it happen? How did it happen? The answers to these questions will provide the building blocks for the personal narrative.

**Pitfalls (common mistakes students make with this assignment):**

Do not use clinical language. Be clear but be yourself.

Avoid the second-person point of view.

Do not switch back and forth between present and past tense.

Make sure your narrator seems reliable.

Make sure the tone fits the subject and aligns with the narrator’s views.

Carefully proofread your essay before turning it in. Make sure to address any errors identified by your text editors.