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The Writing Process

- An Introduction

WHAT IS THE WRITING PROCESS?

Knowing and understanding the writing process will help you in focussing on your ideas, organising your ideas, reducing errors in your writing, and sharing your work. The writing process consists of four stages: (1) prewriting, (2) drafting, (3) revising and editing, and (4) sharing. Read about the four stages in the sections below.

1. Prewriting

Before you begin writing, you need to determine your purpose, topic, and audience. The **purpose** of your paper is your reason for writing it, and this largely depends upon the genre you are writing. For example, you may write a letter telling a friend what you experienced during a world event, or you may write a report to provide information to your audience about some aspect of science. The **topic** is the subject about which you are writing. It could be a person, place, thing, idea, or event. Your **audience** is the person or group of people who will read your writing. Knowing your audience is important as it helps guide you in your selection of information and how to present it.

Next, it is time to brainstorm, record, and organise your ideas. During the **prewriting** stage, you will use graphic organisers and outlines. Both of these are writing tools to help you brainstorm what you want to write about and organise how to present your ideas in writing it. While it may be tempting to jump right into your paper, it is important not to skip this step since your prewriting is what informs the writing of your paper. In this book, you will learn how to use specific prewriting tools for each genre.

2. Drafting

Using your prewriting from the previous step, it is time to turn your notes into an actual piece of writing. This step, where you flesh out your ideas, is known as **drafting**. Your main goal in writing your draft is to get your thoughts down on paper. Don't get caught up in things like spelling; you'll have time to fix errors in the next step.

The first part of drafting is to write an **introduction**. The introduction should grasp the reader's attention and give a preview of the paper's topic. In many types of writing,

diary or journal. It's possible that you've written up your recount as a newspaper article or blog post to share your experience with a larger audience.

Examples of Personal Recounts

In the rest of this unit, you will find 10 sample personal recounts with detailed explanations.

Sample #1

Prompt: Write about a personal achievement or victory.

Topic: hitting my first home run

It's Outta Here!

My baseball team was playing one of our last games of the season, and this would be one of my final chances to hit a home run. I had been playing baseball for six years, since I started t-ball at five years of age, and while I had hit singles and even some doubles, I had never hit a home run in all the years I had played baseball. All my friends on my current team had hit at least one home run during the season, and as the season was nearing its end, I was getting anxious and frustrated because it looked like I was not going to reach my goal of doing the same.

"Okay, Justin. Remember what we practised", I heard my dad say, as I walked up to home plate, my baseball bat in hand.

My dad and I practised in our backyard every weekend before and during the baseball season. When he would pitch the ball, I could hit it over our backyard fence with no problem. My older brother, who was the pitcher for his high school baseball team, would occasionally pitch to me, and I could hit most of his pitches over our fence, too. But when it came time to hit the ball during a game, I just couldn't hit a home run. I would freeze up and forget all the tips my dad and brother had given me.

Legs wide, knees bent, I thought as I stood next to home plate. I curled my fingers around the grip of the bat, taking a few practise swings to make sure

The writer recounts an event that was important to him.

The writer includes words about his feelings so the reader can sense the importance of the event.

The writer goes back and forth in time, between the past and present to add key elements to the recount.

The writer includes dialogue to recount the exact words said, as well as to add interest to the narrative.

Why is this sample a good personal recount?

Let's take a look at why this is a good example of a personal recount. Do you remember the key features of this genre?

1. **Details are written in *first-person point of view*, using pronouns like “I”, “me”, and “my”.**

My baseball team was playing one of our last games of the season, and this would be one of my final chances to hit a home run.

2. **The personal recount tells *what* happened to the author.**

I saw the ball fly through the air and land on the other side of the fence.

I don't remember running around the bases. I just remember my dad and my teammates jumping up and down when I got to home plate. We lost the game, eight to six, but it didn't matter to me. Receiving a game ball for the only home run of the game, I had all my teammates sign and date it so I would remember my accomplishment and the hard work it had taken to reach my goal.

3. **The personal recount also tells *when* and *where* the occurrence happened.**

My baseball team was playing one of our last games of the season, and this would be one of my final chances to hit a home run.

4. **It includes *who* was involved in the experience, sometimes even using dialogue to show the relationship between those people.**

“Just relax, Justin”, I heard my dad say from behind the backstop. He was an assistant coach for the team.

5. **Often, the personal recount also suggests *why* the occurrence happened or why the experience was important.**

I would remember my accomplishment and the hard work it had taken to reach my goal.

6. **More often than not, personal recounts are organised *chronologically*, or in the order that the details actually happened. This is not a hard and fast rule, though.**

“Strike one!”

I stepped away from home plate. I had two balls and one strike. I took a practise swing, adjusting my grip on the bat, and readied myself for the next pitch.

“Strike two!”

Then I heard my dad call a timeout.

Practice

Now it is your turn to show what you know about introductions. Use the sample personal recount, 'Lost and Found', to answer the following questions.

Based on what you now know about the introductions of personal recounts, write an alternative introduction to 'Lost and Found'.

- comparison - The writer tells about two or more events according to how they're similar and/or different.
- emphatic order - The writer reveals details of what happened in order of importance.

Most personal recounts are organised chronologically, as is 'Aunt Carmen's Visit'. The author uses **transitional words and phrases** to organise details in the order in which they occurred, such as the following ones (note this is not an exhaustive list).

Transitional Words/Phrases - Chronological Order

afterwards
at (time)
at first
before
eventually
finally
first of all,
following
in the beginning
initially
next
not long after
on (date)
preceding
previously
secondly
subsequently
then
when