

# CREATING A NARRATIVE PAPER OUTLINE

A narrative paper illustrates an idea or opinion through a story. Creating a narrative outline ensures that your paper stays on topic and continually supports the main idea throughout the narrative.

A great way to continually refer back to your main idea throughout the paper is by using key words and phrases from your main idea or theme in your body paragraphs. This connects the ideas in

## BRAINSTORMING

1. **Main Idea** – Begin your narrative paper outline by brainstorming the main idea you would like to illustrate through your narrative. Narrative papers do not have a distinct thesis statement, but they do portray an arguable idea through the story.
2. **Structure** – Consider how you will illustrate your main idea throughout your narrative.
  - a. Decide whether you will follow a chronological structure, provide multiple perspectives, or create two timelines to reflect contrasting ideas.
  - b. Identify background information, such as details as to where the characters are located (e.g., in a car, home, natural area, etc.). Look to outside objects that could reflect the internal emotions or ideas of a character, such as dark clouds reflecting a brooding teenager’s mood.
  - c. Include details on how characters act and react to the setting (e.g., “the girl stood in awe of the thunderstorm, feeling oddly at peace amidst the turmoil”). This could reflect her own turmoil or her transcendence of turmoil. This is a small example of showing the reader a character’s emotions rather than directly telling them the character’s emotions.
3. **Characters** – Identify your characters, which may be people or ideas/concepts as well. In some cases, ideas or occurrences are the villain rather than physical people. It may be that the protagonist is working against an idea/concept, making the idea/concept the antagonist.
4. **Organize** – With the main idea, structure, and characters in mind, consider key details and turning points that are essential for the development of the main idea (e.g., key components of scenes or settings, revealing conversations or observations, etc.).

## OUTLINE

1. **Introduction** – The introduction sets the tone for the narrative paper and includes the setting, main characters, and main idea.
  - a. **Setting** – Switzerland
  - b. **Main characters** – Mom, daughters, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cows
  - c. **Main idea** – Value of tradition
2. **Body Paragraphs** – Body paragraphs expand on the thesis statement. They serve to provide background, contrast, or details that support the thesis statement. Ideally, they are organized chronologically. They can be sectioned by events, conversations, or settings.
  - a. **Key concept of topic sentence:** Morning – getting ready for the event
    - i. Key Detail: Girls in their red clothing – represent Swiss nationality and pride
    - ii. Key Detail: Conversation I have with the oldest daughter – reveals her excitement to experience tradition
    - iii. Key Detail: The way the morning looks and feels – sets the tone for the event, describes the context, and furthers the old “feel” of the country
3. **Conclusion** – The conclusion of a narrative essay reiterates the main theme of the thesis statement, summarizes the story, and ends with a concluding sentence.
  - a. **Main theme of thesis statement** – Value of tradition
  - b. **Summary of story** – Image of girls in their red shoes again, heading home
  - c. **Concluding sentence** – Speaks on the traditional value of an event and the effect it has on the little girls

## ADDITIONAL TIPS WHEN WRITING

1. **Details** – Include details in the narrative, such as emotions or facial expressions, to make the narrative paper more realistic and vivid.
2. **Show vs. tell** – Rather than telling the reader that the character was sad, show the reader he was sad through conversation and/or observations.
3. **Outside perspective and characters** – Use an outside (third person) perspective to help the reader connect the story to themselves. If it is too personal (i.e., written from the character’s first person perspective, through use of “I”), it can be too impersonal for the reader. Using observations about nature or society can help bring the story to the reader.