

Narrative Essay

What is Narration?

- Narration tells a story by presenting events in an orderly, logical sequence.
- Histories, biographies, and autobiographies have a narrative structure, as do diaries, journals, and some posts on blogs and social networking sites.
- Narration is the dominant pattern in many works of fiction and poetry, and it is an essential part of casual conversation.
- Narration also underlies folk and fairy tales and many news reports.



Using Narration

- Narration can provide the structure for an entire essay, but narrative passages may also appear in essays that are not primarily narrative.
- For example, in an argumentative essay supporting stricter gun-safety legislation, you might devote one or two paragraphs to the story of a child accidentally killed by a handgun.

Throughout your college career ...

- Many of your assignments will call for narration.
- In English composition class, you may be asked to write about an experience that was important to your development as an adult.
- On a European history exam, you may need to summarize the events that led to Napoleon's defeat at the Battle of Waterloo.
- In a technical writing class, you may be asked to write a report tracing a company's negligent actions.



- Throughout each of these situations (as well as in many additional assignments), your writing will have a primarily narrative structure.



Planning a Narrative Essay

Developing a Thesis Statement



Although it is usually best to include an explicit **thesis statement**, you may also **imply** (suggest) your thesis statement through your selection and arrangement of events.



For instance, in a narrative about your problems with credit card debt, your purpose may be to show your readers that college students should not have easy access to credit cards.



Thesis statement: "My negative experiences with credit have convinced me that college students should not have easy access to credit cards."

Including Enough Detail

- Narratives, like other types of writing, need to include rich, specific details if they are to be convincing.
- Each detail should help create a picture for the reader; even exact times, dates, and geographic locations can be helpful.
- Top of page 101 – My Mother Never Worked
- The list of details adds interest and authenticity to the narrative. The central figure in the narrative is a busy, productive woman, and readers know this because they are given an exhaustive catalog of her activities.



Varying Sentence Structure

- When narratives present a long series of events, all the sentences can begin to sound alike: She sewed dresses. She milked cows. She fed pigs. She fed calves. She cared for chickens.
- Such a string of sentences may become monotonous for the readers.
- You can eliminate the monotony by varying your sentence structure – for instance, by using a variety of sentence openings or by combining simple sentences.



For instance:

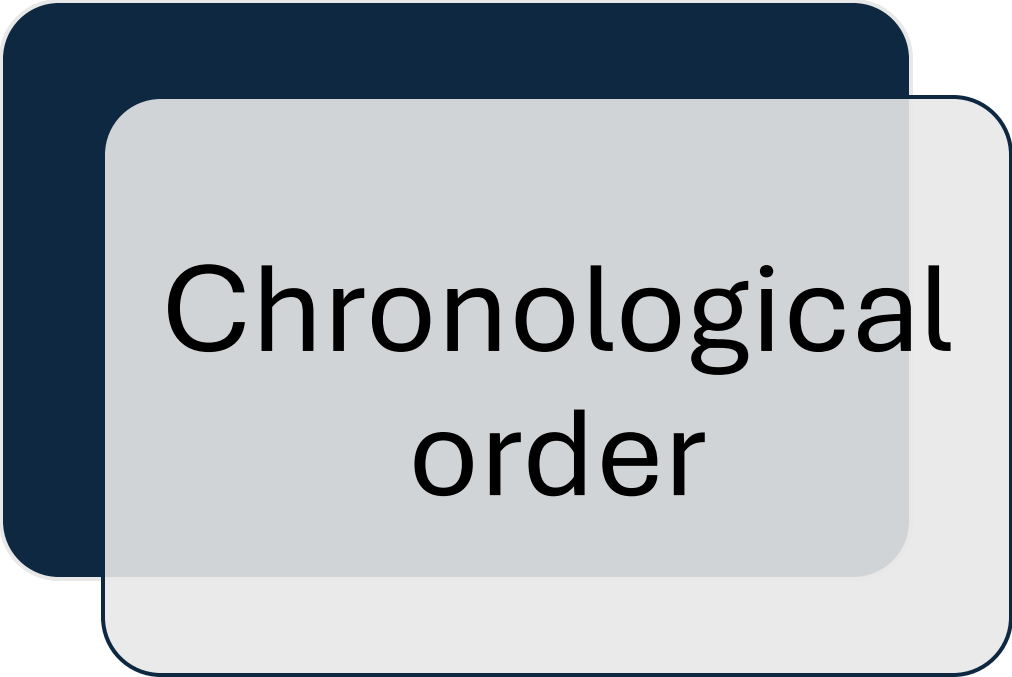
My Mother Never Worked



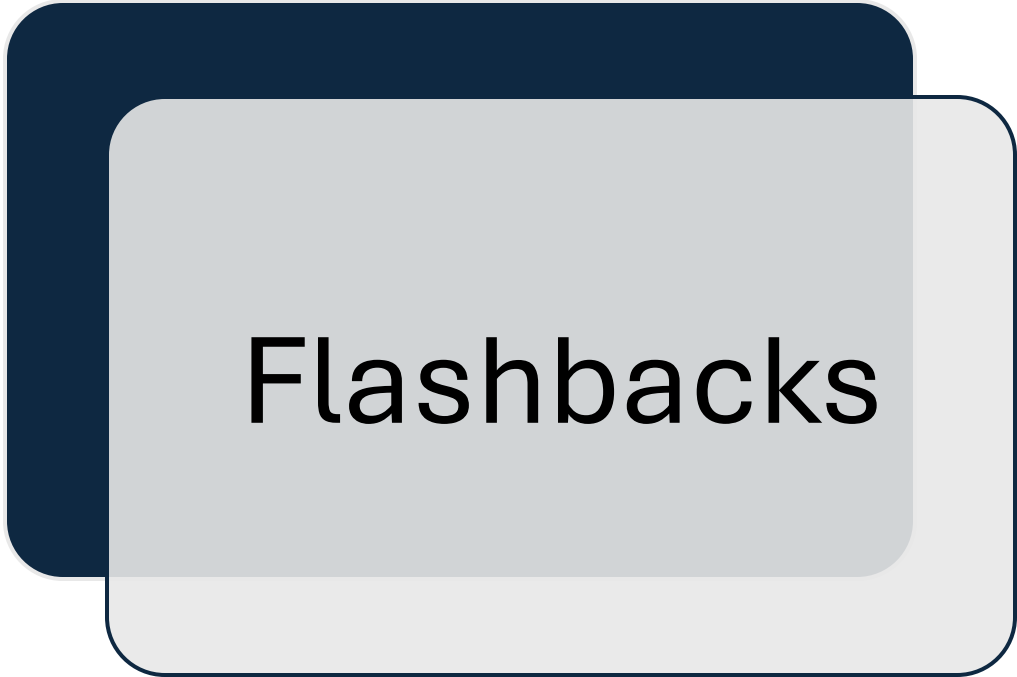
In the winter she sewed night after night, endlessly. ... Every morning and every evening she milked cows, fed pigs and calves, cared for chickens. ...



Maintaining Clear Narrative Order



Chronological
order



Flashbacks

Transitions

- Connecting words or phrases – help link events in time, enabling narratives to flow smoothly. Without transitional words and phrases, narratives would lack coherence, and readers would be unsure of the correct sequence of events.
- Examples of transition words -- *first, second, next, then, later, at the same time, meanwhile, immediately, soon, before, earlier, after, afterward, now, and finally.*



Structuring a Narrative Essay



Like other essays, a narrative essay has an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. If your essay's thesis is explicitly stated, it will usually appear in the introduction.



The body paragraphs of your essay will recount the events that make up the narrative, following a clear and orderly plan.



Finally, the conclusion will give your readers the sense that your narrative is complete, perhaps restating your thesis in different words or by summarizing key points or events.

Revising a Narrative Essay

- Revision is not something you do after your essay is finished. It continues throughout the writing process as you repeatedly consider the logic and clarity of your ideas as well as how effectively they are presented.



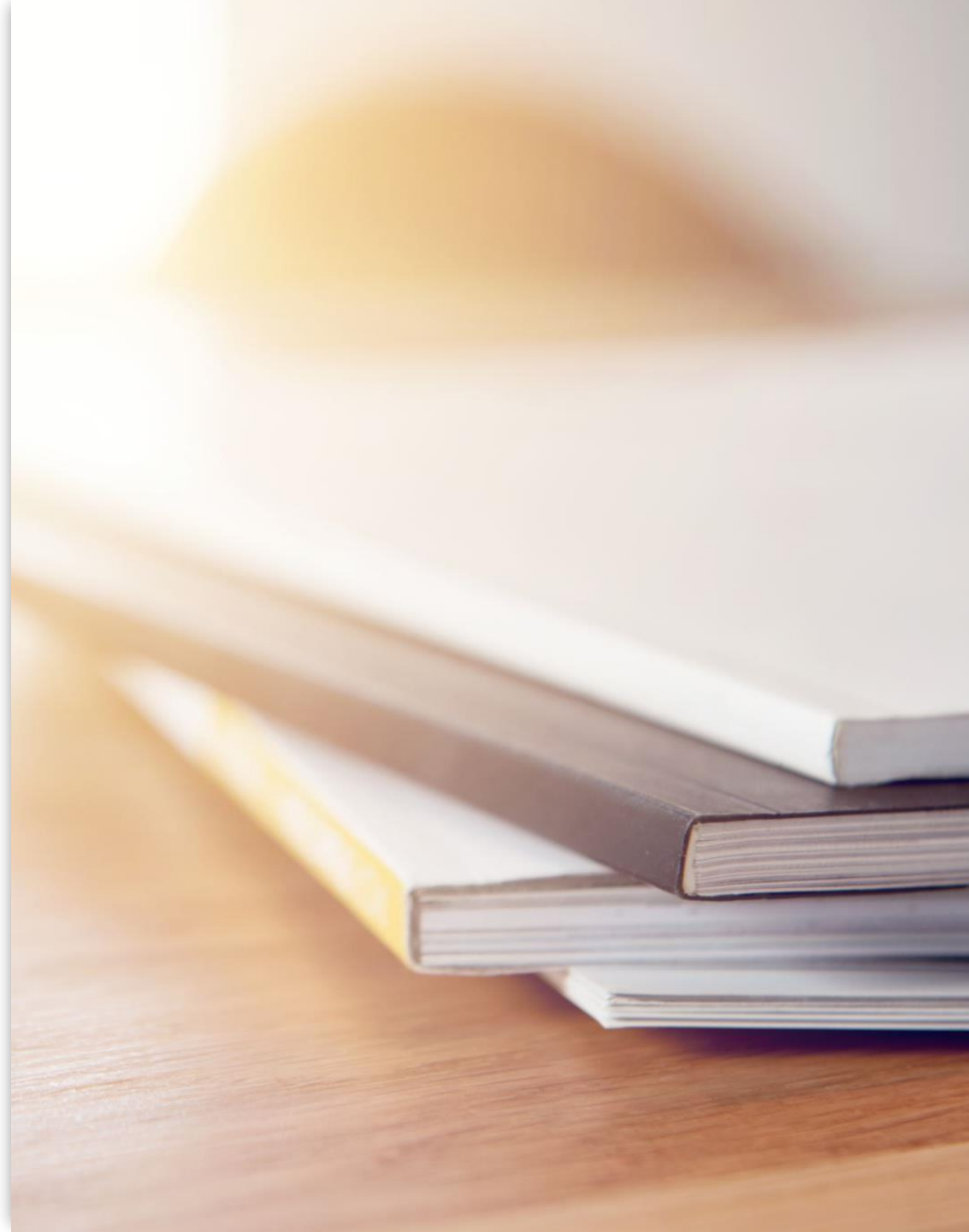
Revision

Revision is not simply a matter of proofreading or editing, or crossing out one word and substituting another or correcting errors in spelling and punctuation; revision involves **reseeing** and **rethinking** what you have written.

When you revise, you may find yourself adding and deleting extensively, reordering whole sentences or paragraphs as you consider what you want to communicate to your audience.

Revision

- Revision can take a lot of time, so don't be discouraged if you have to go through several drafts before you think your essay is ready to submit.





Tips for Revision



Give yourself a cooling off period.



Revise on hard copy.



Read your draft aloud.



Take advantage of opportunities to get feedback.



Try not to get overwhelmed.



Don't let your ego get in the way.



Revise in stages.



Read "Thirty-Eight
Who Saw Murder
Didn't Call the
Police"



Reference

- Kirszner, Laurie G., and Stephen R. Mandell. *Patterns for College Writing: A Rhetorical Reader and Guide*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2024.