

Module 2: Narrative Writing

MODULE OBJECTIVES

In this module, you will learn how to

- analyze and discuss the qualities of “good” narrative writing
- organize ideas using chronological development
- use the narrative technique of “showing, not telling”
- create smooth flow between a variety of sentence types
- compose/translate an engaging short story

KEY PRINCIPLES

	How well do you know each principle/language feature (LF)? Put a check (✓) in the column. I have ...			
	never heard of this principle/LF before.	heard of/seen this principle/LF and understand what it means.	used this principle/LF, but not sure if correctly.	used this principle/LF, confidently in my writing.
unity				
coherence				
cohesion				
showing, not telling				
narrative tenses				



Discuss (in class): Work with your partner(s). Share ideas on 2–3 of the topics below.

1. Describe a time when you received some good news.
2. Describe an embarrassing moment you had while traveling.
3. Describe an occasion when you had to greet a new group of people.
4. Describe a time when you met someone you hadn't seen for a long time.
5. Describe a time when you learned something important from a mistake you made.

PREPARE TO WRITE

Model Text

The Blue Chair

By Da-mi Kim

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coherence
chronological
order

cohesion
pronouns,
conjunctions,
time connectives

dynamic verbs
simple past

past progressive

past perfect

past perfect
progressive

**sentence
styling**
mix of sentence
lengths & types

stative verbs
simple past

Last fall, **during my first semester** of graduate school in Seoul, Mom and Dad visited me from Ulsan, my hometown. **Soon they** noticed I didn't have a comfortable chair, so off we went the next day to find one. From early morning we searched, **and** it was late afternoon by the time we managed to find a nice one in my favorite color.

Sitting on the chair, I **spun** and **cheered** happily like the poor young girl I had been, "Yay! Only 50,000 won!"

The afternoon sun **had set** by the time we arrived at my apartment, and my parents left for home. About an hour later, while I **was tidying up**, I called Dad.

"Dad, how's the drive going?" I asked.

"Um, not bad," he said.

The hair on the back of my neck stood up.

"Dear?" I heard my mom say. "I'm driving because your father's been crying the whole way."

Crying? Dad? Unbelievable! Actually, he **had been brooding**¹ before they left. After a moment's silence, in a barely recognizable² voice, he confessed³, "I'm sorry for raising you in such poor conditions. It breaks my heart that you're satisfied with a cheap, second-hand chair."

I told him that I loved him and felt *rich*—with him in my life. Then I hung up and sat down heavily in my "new" blue chair.

I had never **heard** my dad express emotions like these. Of course, I **knew** that he loved me, but he **kept** his love hidden deep inside—just beyond my reach. And then I **realized** something: Dad was nearly sixty-five, and time was wearing away his tough veneer⁴. I guess it's true what people **say**—you can't **hide** your true colors as you **approach** the autumn of your life.

orientation

complication
narrative and
descriptive details
that bring the story
to life—e.g.,
sensory details,
action, and
dialogue

resolution

coda
personal
reflection

theme
simple present

Glossary

¹ **brood** *v. intrans.* to think about something that makes you sad

² **recognizable** *adj.* familiar or easy to notice

³ **confess** *v. trans. or intrans.* to admit that you have done something that you feel bad about

⁴ **veneer** *n.* a thin layer of wood or plastic used to cover a cheaper material

RHETORICAL FOCUS 1 Personal Narrative

A personal narrative tells the story of an experience that took place in the writer's life. It focuses on the details of the experience, but it also lets the writer express his or her thoughts and feelings about what happened.

A personal narrative has the following parts:

Orientation: This is the beginning of the story. The writer introduces the characters and describes the setting (usually by answering several of the 5 W's: *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why*)

Complication: This is where the main events of the story unfold, leading up to a problem for the main character.

Resolution: This is the end of the story. The problem is resolved so things return to normal for the main character, even though changes have occurred.

Coda (+ theme): The writer reflects on how she has changed or what she has learned from the experience (about herself, about the other character(s), about the world, etc.). The writer concludes by stating the theme (i.e., the main idea) in the final sentence, sometimes in the form of a well-known proverb: "From this experience, I learned that two heads are better than one."

WRITING SKILL 1 Unity, Coherence, and Cohesion

Unity means "oneness." A unified text develops one main idea. Good narrative writing focusses on one storyline and develops one main idea.

Coherence means "logical order." Narrative writing follows the principle of **chronological** order, from past to present.

Cohesion refers to "smooth flow." Pronouns (e.g., *he*, *she*, *they*), conjunctions (e.g., *and*, *while*), and time connectives (*soon*, *after an hour*) help writer's guide readers smoothly through their texts.

ANALYZE

A. Look at the model text and answer the questions.

1. Which of the themes below appear in the story? Put a check (✓) in the column.

getting old		loneliness		illness		poverty	
-------------	--	------------	--	---------	--	---------	--

2. Write one phrase or sentence from the story that reflects a theme you selected.

3. Is the text **unified**? Are there any sentences that do not belong?

4. Is the text **coherent**? Is it arranged logically from past to present?

5. Can you find 1–2 more examples of words and/or phrases that the writer used to make the text **cohesive**? E.g., **during** my first semester, ...

B. Look at the model text and answer the questions.

1. What do we know after reading the **orientation**?

- the number of characters in the story
- the time of year the story takes place
- what the theme of the story is
- where the story takes place

2. In the **complication** section, the writer uses lots of dynamic verbs (i.e., “action” verbs). Why?

3. In the **coda** section, the writer uses mainly stative verbs (i.e., “thinking” verbs). Why?

4. What verb tense does the writer use to express the **theme**? Why?

5. Overall, what effect did the story have on you? Did it make you smile, tremble, or cry? How did the writer’s **language use** (e.g., everyday words, use of contractions, sentence styling) contribute to this effect?

C. Personal narratives are very common in newspapers and magazines. Also very common are short narrative paragraphs at the beginning of newspaper and magazine articles. Writers use these short stories/anecdotes just to attract (or “hook”) readers.

Visit the Flipboard magazine *Narrative* and skim through (i.e., read quickly for general understanding) the texts below. Say whether each text is a personal narrative (N) or just contains an introductory hook (H).

1. N “The Most Disappointing Day of My Life” (Free Personal Narrative Examples)
2. H “Ready-to-Eat Finds a Place at Table”
3. _____ “Small Luxuries Generate Big Money”
4. _____ “Antique Shop Owner Asks Homeless Man ...”
5. _____ “The Life-Changing Question a Stranger on a Bench Asked Me”

Tip: Google the title if it does not appear in Flipboard.

Now visit **Padlet** and choose your favorite **personal narrative** and say why.

APPLY

A. Arrange the sentences in chronological order (1–6). Mark an “X” next to the one sentence that breaks the unity of the story. Finally, label the different parts of the story.

The Birthday Present

Last fall I moved away from home and into a dormitory at college. I was so happy to be finally free from my parents’ “nest.” This year, I was going to fully enjoy my birthday with my friends, even though the dorm had a midnight curfew. } o _____

_____ When my cell phone rang, I dropped it in shock—it was already 1:00 a.m.!

_____ When I arrived at 2:00 a.m., I had to listen to her lecture.

_____ After dinner, we got a table at one of the coolest college pubs.

_____ She threatened to contact my parents and even announced, “this will go on your school record.” My face reddened. } c _____

4 The caller was my dorm leader, and she was demanding that I return immediately.

_____ When I was an elementary school student, I wanted to be an English teacher.

_____ The music was loud, and everybody was having a great time. But I was still careful to keep track of time. Until I wasn’t.

In the end she let me off with a warning—“as a birthday present,” she said. } r _____

I learned an important lesson that night: freedom comes with responsibility. } c _____

B. Choose the best theme for the story. Label the different parts of the story.

The Fox and the Crow

Once upon a time, a Fox saw a Crow fly off with a piece of cheese in its beak and settle on a branch of a tree in the woods. } _____

“That is for me,” said Fox, and he walked up to the foot of the tree. “Good-day, Crow,” he cried. “How pretty you look today: How bright your feathers; how bright your eyes. I guess your voice must be more beautiful than any of the birds in the woods. Let me hear just one song from you, please.” The Crow lifted up her head and began to sing, but the moment she opened her mouth the piece of cheese fell to the ground, only to be snapped up by Fox. } _____

“That is enough singing,” he said. } _____

“In exchange for your cheese, let me give you a piece of advice for the future: _____.” } _____

- a) There’s no such thing as a free lunch
- b) When in Rome, do as the Romans do
- c) Do not trust flatterers

C. Compare the texts below.

Original version

PLLT class is so difficult to me.
<p>Last Thursday, I was panicky as usual in PLLT class. I got a text message from one of my former co-teachers. The message was that he got musical tickets. He would visit Seoul and asked me to watch the musical and have dinner. I thought I needed some fresh air to refresh myself. Thus, I made an appointment and we were going to meet at 7:40 p.m. However, due to the traffic jam, he could not arrive on time and he was worried if we could get into the theater or not. I got the tickets at the office and asked the manager to let us in. In fact, many westerners can't understand Korean gag concerts due to cultural difference. I was happy watching the performance. We had dinner and I asked him a number of questions about my old students and other co-teachers. He answered them in detail so I could relieve a little stress.</p>

Revised version

Eureka!
<p>Last Thursday in class, I <u>sighed</u> louder than usual—everything was all too new. <u>Four weeks earlier</u>, I started grad school, and already I needed a break. Thankfully, <u>around four o' clock</u>, my phone <u>buzzed</u> with a message from one of my former co-teachers; he would visit Seoul with Gag Concert tickets. He <u>invited</u> me to join him and eat dinner together. I thought it would be a great chance to refresh myself.</p> <p>So I answered, "Yes, of course!"</p> <p>We planned to meet <u>at seven-forty p.m.</u> <u>But because of</u> the traffic, he didn't think he would arrive in time. He kept sending me messages, worrying that we wouldn't be allowed in. Fortunately we made it, and we <u>clapped and laughed</u> a lot. While eating dinner <u>after the concert</u>, I asked many questions about my students and other co-teachers. Thanks to his company, I relieved my longing for work life.</p> <p>On my way home <u>after dinner</u>, I had a thought: Enjoy life! I couldn't enjoy my life on the excuse of having been busy owing to housework and assignments. This experience taught me that although there are many obstacles around, <u>I can still enjoy my life with the right attitude.</u></p>

List three more ways that the revised version is better. *The revised version ...*

1. *has a short, catchy title—it is more attractive*
2. *has a more general subject—it will be more interesting to general adult newspaper readers*
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

VOCABULARY: Showing, not telling

An important feature of good narration is “showing, not telling.” When you show (rather than tell), you invite your readers to see and feel what you experienced.

We can show by **replacing was/were** (or a linking verb) with a dynamic verb and paraphrasing the sentence(s).

✗ I was competitive, and I was very successful.

✓ I competed in many contests, and I won a lot of awards.

A. Rewrite the sentences so they show, rather than tell. Use the words in parentheses. Follow the example.

1. My first puppy was destructive. My sofa was ruined. **(destroyed)**

My first puppy destroyed my sofa.

2. Jason was annoying with everyone. **(annoyed)**

3. The elephant was protective. It stood between its calf and the photographer. **(protected)**

4. The elderly woman was confused. **(looked around)**

5. I was embarrassed. **(covered)**

B. Rewrite the sentences so they show, rather than tell. **Tip:** Visit the Flipboard magazine *Narrative* and refer to “[Cheat Sheets for Writing Body Language](#)” for your narrative writing.

1. The boy was nervous.

2. My coworker was defensive.

3. When I entered the classroom, the students looked tired.

The key to using this technique effectively is balance—neither too much nor too little. In some cases it’s better just to tell:

- when you want to move quickly to a more interesting part of your story
- when you’ve already used a lot of description. If you show too often, the parts of your narrative that are supposed to stand out won’t, and your readers may get tired
- when you have only limited space. Showing requires more words—so tell when short, concise narration is needed (e.g., in the introduction of an article or essay)

People: Character and behavior

C. Which **collocations** describe negative aspects of character? Now ask for your partner's birth month and find out if the characteristics/behaviors are true.

January	You are good company , but you may have a selfish streak .	July	You can be painfully shy in social situations, but at school/work you are supremely confident .
February	You have an outgoing personality and a good sense of humor .	August	You have a tendency to make snap decisions .
March	You have a vivid imagination , but you tend to lose your temper too easily.	September	You have a strong sense of responsibility and always keep your word .
April	You are highly intelligent with a razor-sharp mind .	October	You are good at keeping secrets and never bear a grudge .
May	You set high standards for yourself and are fiercely loyal to your friends.	November	You find it hard to keep your temper if you think someone is making a fool out of you .
June	The best aspect of your personality is the way you always put others first .	December	You can be brutally honest and sometimes hurt others' feelings .

D. Add the missing words in these letters where readers are discussing their and others' characters.

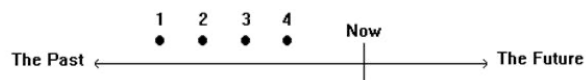
<p>1) I know that I _____ a tendency to bear a grudge, but I just can't forget something bad a friend did to me recently. She has a selfish streak and doesn't care sometimes how much she hurts my feelings. I am finding it increasingly hard to _____ my temper with her. But perhaps it might be better to _____ my temper and let her know how I really feel?</p>	<p>3) My boyfriend has a really friendly, _____ personality and a great _____ of humor. He's intelligent and has a razor-sharp mind. The perfect man. We've been together now for a year, and I like him a lot, but don't <i>love</i> him anymore. Should I be _____ honest with him and tell him?</p>
<p>2) I'm a little shy, though not _____ shy, but sometimes I think I _____ the impression that I'm unfriendly. How can I convince people that I'm good _____ and worth getting to know?</p>	<p>4) Should I talk about personal matters to my closest colleague at work? She is not very good at _____ secrets and she has a very _____ imagination. She always promises not to tell other people, but I'm not sure she always _____ her word.</p>

Tip: See *English Collocations in Use* (Unit 17 + Units 18–21) for other useful chunks to use in your narrative writing.

GRAMMAR 1: Narrative tenses

Narrative tenses are verb tenses that we use to talk about the past. They are common in descriptions of past events (e.g., newspaper reports), fictional stories, and nonfiction texts (e.g., autobiographies).

1. Simple Past



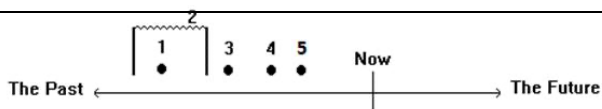
Used to show that an event began and ended at a specific time in the past

Example I **arrived** and **picked up** (1) my husband. Then we **drove** (2) to the restaurant.

Use to move the main events of the story forward

Form *-ed* ending for regular verbs (various endings for irregular verbs, e.g., *drove*)

2. Past Progressive



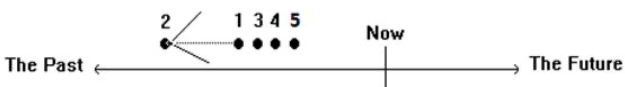
Used to show that something was happening at a specific time in the past. It's often used to contrast two events—one of which happened *while* the other was happening. *While* is common with this tense.

Example While the woman **was rummaging** (2) in her purse, I **checked** (1) my phone.

Use to describe the situation surrounding a main event in the story (+ to add detail)

Form *was / were + -ing* form of the verb (present participle)

3. Past Perfect



Used to describe a relationship between two events that **both** occurred in the past. One event occurred before the other. *After* and *before* are common with this tense. (When they are used, the past perfect is often not necessary, and you can use the simple past instead.)

Example I slept in until 10 a.m. (1). I **had arrived** home late last night (2). My mom prepared breakfast for me (3), and then I went (4) back to bed.

Use to show that something happened before a main event in the story (e.g., “backstory”)

Form *had + -ed* form of the verb (past participle)

4. Past Perfect Progressive



Used to describe a relationship between two events in the past—one occurring before the other. *When* and *before* are common with this tense. *For* and *since* are also common (used to measure duration).

Example My husband **had been driving** for hours (2) when the accident occurred (1).

Use to emphasize that the first event was ongoing or repeated (+ to add detail)

Form *had + been + -ing* form of the verb (present participle)

Exercise 1: Match the underlined verb phrases to the correct verb tenses.

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. ____ It <u>snowed</u> yesterday. | (A) past progressive |
| 2. ____ While my brother <u>was eating</u> breakfast, I slept. | (B) past simple |
| 3. ____ The best gifts <u>come</u> from the heart. | (C) past perfect |
| 4. ____ Nicole <u>had already left</u> before I arrived. | (D) present simple |
| 5. ____ We <u>had been driving</u> for only a few hours. | (E) past perfect progressive |

Exercise 2: Look at the model text. Complete the chart with **one** example of each verb tense.

Tenses	Example
past simple	
past progressive	
past perfect	
past perfect progressive	
present simple	

b) In what part(s) of the model text does the writer use the past simple?

c) In what part(s) the model text does the writer use the present simple?

Exercise 3: Choose the correct form of the verbs in parentheses.

Ruined Dinner
<p>Last Friday I (1) (met / meet) my boyfriend at our favorite restaurant. I (2) (arrive / arrived) on time, but it (3) (was pouring / had poured) rain. I didn't have an umbrella, so I went inside and found us a nice table. After an hour my boyfriend finally (4) (showed up / show up). His clothes (5) (were soaking / was soaking) wet, and he (6) (was covered / were covered) in mud.</p> <p>I was furious! But I listened to his explanation.</p> <p>A bus (7) (had driven / had been driving) straight through a puddle of mud and (8) (splashed / been splashing) him from head to toe. He (9) (had been walking / walked), soaking wet and cold, ever since. We couldn't stay at the restaurant, so we (10) (left / were leaving) and ordered takeout instead.</p>

GRAMMAR 2: Time connectives

Writers use different **adverbials of time and sequence** to help their stories flow smoothly.

Words: Adverbs that show sequence

next, later, finally

Next, we flagged down a taxi and took it to Union Station.

now, soon, then

Now it was my turn to sing a song.

Comma use: Use a comma after all adverbs of sequence when they **start** the sentence—**except** *now*, *soon*, and *then*. Use **two** commas around adverbs when they interrupt the flow of the sentence.

Phrases: Prepositional phrases that answer “when”

after +

time

After eleven-thirty p.m. the party died down.
after indicates a time that follows an earlier time

before +

time

Sometime **before** 6:30 a.m. the baker arrived to work.
before indicates a time earlier than something already mentioned

for +

time

I was waiting for him **for** two hours.
for indicates how long something continues

by +

time

“Hurry up!” Jin said. “We need to be there **by** eight o’clock!”
by is used to talk about something that will happen at or before a certain time. There is a **deadline**. Use with **verbs** that express an **action performed once**, e.g., *arrive*, *leave*, *finish*, *pay*, *wake up*, etc.

until +

time/noun

“You can watch television **until** ten o’clock, OK?” Mom said.
until is used to say that an action will continue up to a certain time and then **stop**. Use with **verbs** that express **continuousness**, e.g., *stay*, *live*, *wait*, *drive*, *sleep*, etc.

after +

noun

We both, **after** a short walk in the fresh sea air, felt better.
after indicates a time that follows an event

during +

noun

I walked to the beach **during** the weekend.
during happens **within** a time frame. (At some point on the weekend I walked to the beach, maybe in the morning, maybe in the afternoon)

over +

noun

I walked to the beach **over** the weekend.
over happens **across** a time frame. (It took me the whole weekend to walk to the beach.)

Comma use: Use a comma after a “long” phrase (**4 words or more**) when it starts the sentence.

Adverbial clauses: Groups of words that form dependent clauses

when	= at that time	When I entered the hotel lobby , the concierge greeted me.
before	= at an earlier time	I (had) left the restaurant before anyone noticed the broken dish . Note: the main clause and the adverb clause can be inverted.
after	= at a later time	After I (had) helped the elderly man , he offered to buy me lunch. Note: a present or past tense is used in an adverb clause, not a future form.
by the time	= one event completed before another	I had eaten dinner and paid the bill by the time my blind date arrived . Note: the past perfect is used in the main clause.

Comma use: Use a comma after an adverb clause when it **starts** the sentence. Use **no** comma when it **ends** the sentence. (You can omit the comma after a “short” opening adverb clause.)

Exercise 1: Choose the correct preposition [during, over, by, until] to complete the sentences.

1. The departure time was at 8:25, so we had to arrive at the airport [during, over, by, until] 6:25.
2. I met my husband [during, over, by, until] a trip to the Philippines in 2015.
3. I waited for her to call [during, over, by, until] 7 p.m., and then I gave up.
4. I really got to know my in-laws well [during, over, by, until] summer vacation.
5. I told my son he had to wake up [during, over, by, until] 8:00 a.m., but he slept [during, over, by, until] almost 9:00.

Exercise 2: Find and underline **ten** more adverbials of time and sequence.

Shock of a Lifetime
<p><u>In the winter of 2004</u>, I went backpacking around New Zealand. Finally, I ended up in Queenstown—a great place for skiing. I explored the city over the afternoon, and at night I got a mixed dormitory room in a youth hostel. I didn’t mind sharing a room with men because I was planning to go skiing <u>the next morning</u> anyway. At seven-thirty a.m. there wasn’t anyone around, so I hopped in the shower. But while I was washing, I heard the sounds of people walking past. Soon everything quieted down. After another ten minutes under the water, I dressed and walked down the corridor to the change room. But, oh my—I was surrounded by naked men everywhere! It turned out I was in the <i>men’s</i> shower room. Most looked very surprised, and some even giggled. I pretended that nothing was out of the ordinary and marched past them with my head held high. After I escaped, I blushed brightly. Then I quickly packed up my bag and paid my bill in a hurry. I know I should’ve checked <u>before entering the shower room</u>; it was the worst honest mistake I’ve ever made. But when I look back, it makes me laugh. I guess it’s really true: there’s humor in embarrassing moments—but only in the comfort of hindsight.</p>

Prepositions of time: in, on, at

in	on	at
Amount of time: in one hour, in twenty minutes	Days of the week: on Monday, on Wednesday, on Friday,	The time: at ten o'clock, at 6.30
Years: in 1996, in 2015	Dates: on July 10, on September 14, 2015	Religious festivals: at Easter, at Christmas, at Chuseok (BUT on Christmas morning, on Chuseok day)
Months: in January, in February	Parts of a named day: on Monday morning, on Thursday evening, on Friday night	Points in time: at the beginning of February, at the end of the week
Parts of the day: in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening, (BUT at night)	Special case: on time (means at an expected or agreed upon time)	
Seasons: in spring, in summer, in fall, in winter		
Special case: in time (means at or before a deadline; often followed by <i>to</i> -infinitive or <i>for</i>).		

Exercise 3: Choose the correct preposition [in, on, at] to complete the sentences.

1. She said, "You can wait for him. He'll be back [at | in | on] ten minutes."
2. Korean employees usually get several days off work [at | in | on] Chuseok.
3. And then she said, "You should have come [at | in | on] time. It's rude to be late!"
4. The security guard informed me that the building was closed [in | on | at] Mondays.
5. Luckily, I made it to the airport just [at | in | on] time to catch my flight to the Maldives.

Exercise 4: Visit the Flipboard magazine *Narrative* (or another source) and read closely (i.e., notice the writer's language use) several personal narratives. Share examples of the narrative tenses (+ the simple present), time connectives, or punctuation on **Padlet**.

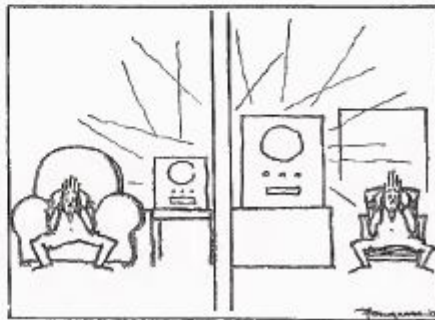
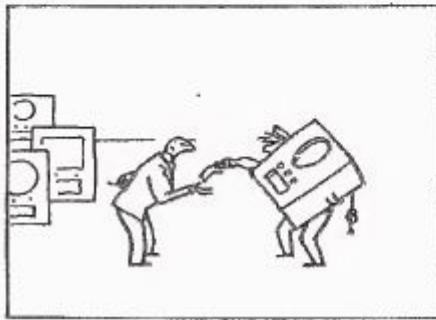
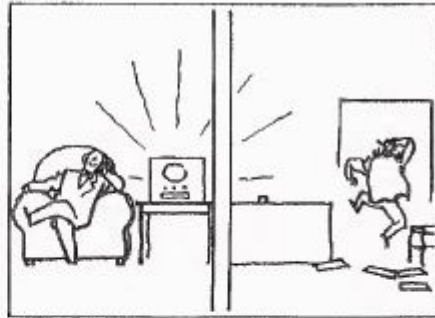
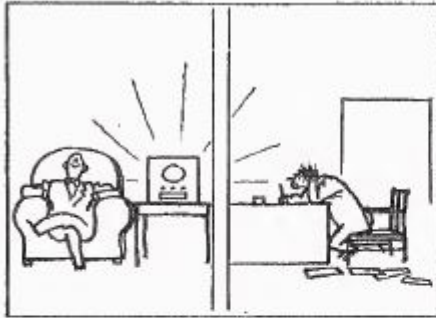
Article	Examples
"Icebreaker"	"A man <u>was shoveling</u> just up the street." <i>Past progressive: describes the situation surrounding the main events of the author's narrative</i>
"Turbulence"	" <u>When I stand up again he</u> has somehow closed the distance between us and is standing right in front of me." <i>This sentence doesn't match the rule "use a comma after an adverb clause when it starts the sentence." In this example there's no comma after the when clause. But it's "short," so maybe that's why the author didn't use a comma.</i>

GROUP WRITING

The purpose of this task is for you to practice narrative writing.




Use the pictures below to write a story in the 1st person (You are the person on the right in the first picture). Everyone in your group should get some writing/keyboard practice.



Pre-write

1. Start by brainstorming vocabulary (3–5 **nouns, verbs, & adjectives**).

Picture 1	Picture 2	Picture 3	Picture 4

 Write a draft	
title	
names	date
orientation (1-2 sentences)	
complication (5-6 sentences)	
resolution (1 sentence)	
coda (2-3 sentences)	
theme (1 sentence)	<i>From this experience, I learned ...</i>

	<p>every evening from seven o'clock till midnight the music lover to sit leaning back comfortably the armchair to listen to be fond of the radio set to switch on to increase the volume to make too much noise to think only of oneself selfish the neighbour the flat next door</p>	<p>the thin wall separated by to wish to work not to be able to concentrate the study the writing table foolish to try hard to find impossible to be at one's wit's end unable because of one Tuesday evening he cannot stand it any longer</p>	<p>to take one's revenge to get one's own back to leave in a rage the radio shop to buy the most powerful to drown to blare neither of the two to stop up one's cars the result unexpected not to hear anything at all to fail ridiculous</p>
	<p>Idiom: "Don't cut off your nose to spite your face." "Cutting off the nose to spite the face" describes a needlessly self-destructive over-reaction to a problem. It's a warning against chasing revenge in a way that hurts you as much as (or more than) the other person.</p>		

GRAMMAR 3: Sentence styling

Sentence “styling” refers to using a mix of different sentence lengths and types. In “popular” writing (i.e., newspaper and magazine writing), writers vary their sentence lengths and types to help keep readers interested.

1. Different sentence **lengths** (i.e., a mix of long and short sentences)

- ✓ Crying? Dad? Unbelievable! Actually, he had been brooding before they left.
- ✓ The music was loud, and everybody was having a great time. But I was still careful to keep track of time. Until I wasn't.

2. Different sentence **types** (i.e., simple, compound, and complex sentences)

- ✓ I expected someone to help her. (**simple**: one independent clause)
- ✓ I expected someone to help her, but no one offered any help. (**compound**: two independent clauses joined together)
- ✓ While I was walking home, I saw a mother with a baby struggling up a staircase. (**complex**: a dependent clause joined to an independent clause)

Three comma rules

1. Separate two independent clauses in a compound sentence with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (CC) (e.g., *and, but, or*).

- ✓ The car was perfect in every way, and it was all mine!

Note: Use **no** comma after a CC at the beginning of a sentence (unless it's part of a pair).

- ✗ But, that's not what happened next.
- ✓ But that's not what happened next.
- ✓ But, to be honest, that's not what happened next.

2. Use a comma after adverbial clauses when they start the sentence.

- ✓ When I saw the police officer, my heart stopped.

Note: Use **no** comma when one ends the sentence.

- ✓ My heart stopped when I saw the police officer.

3. Use two commas around any structure that interrupts the main flow of ideas in the sentence.

- ✗ At ten o'clock right on time as usual my fiancé texted me.
- ✓ Later that day, and this is when I got scared, I saw him outside my apartment!

MECHANICS 1: Punctuation

Three punctuation marks end sentences: The period (.) the exclamation point (!), and the question mark (?). The apostrophe (') is used to form "contractions."

- . Marks the end of a declarative sentence. When a sentence ends with quoted material, the period goes inside the closing double quotation mark.

✗ This experience taught me that "two heads are better than one".

✓ This experience taught me that "two heads are better than one."

Note: The proverb is not *italicized*, Capitalized, or **bolded**.

- ! Used to show extreme emotion (one is enough)

✗ We shrieked in fright, "Oh my god!!!"

✓ We shrieked in fright, "Oh my god!"

When a quotation ends with an exclamation point, the comma is omitted.

✗ "What a terrible thing to say!", Sujin cried out.

✓ "What a terrible thing to say!" Sujin cried out.

✓ "What a terrible thing to say!" she cried out.

- ? Marks the end of a direct question, and when a quotation ends with a question mark, the comma is omitted (as with the exclamation point).

✗ I wondered if she would like my gift?

✓ "Do you like your gift?" I asked.

- ' Used to form contractions (e.g., *it's*, *didn't*, *couldn't*). Contractions are very common in popular writing, but they are considered too informal for academic writing. The same is true for coordinating conjunctions (e.g., *and*, *but*, *or*) at the beginning of sentences. They are common in popular writing but not in academic writing. In academic writing conjunctive adverbs such as *in addition*, *however*, etc. should be used.

✓ I really thought I **didn't** need anyone's help. **But** it **wasn't** true. (popular style)

✓ **However**, Chomsky's transformational grammar **was not** able to account for this aspect of language. (academic style)

ANALYZE

A. Find and correct the comma errors. Sometimes a comma needs to be added.

1. This shocked me and I blushed.
2. But, I learned an important lesson from this experience.
3. Are you comfortable? Or, shall I turn the heat down?

B. Find and correct **seven** punctuation errors. Sometimes a punctuation mark needs to be added.

Hurtful Thoughts	
x	It was my husband’s first break in two weeks, and I was really looking forward to spending time with him. I packed a week’s supply of fresh clothing for him and set off in my car to the hospital where he was interning. But the traffic crawled along in the late afternoon, and the usual one-
x	hour drive took nearly two hours. Finally I arrived and picked up my exhausted-looking hubby.
x	After a quick hug we drove to the local department store for dinner and waited another forty minutes to be seated. Then, his phone buzzed ominously on the table.
x	“Who is it?” I asked.
	“It’s an emergency, honey. I have to go,” he groaned.
	I felt jinxed. By the time we got to the underground parking machines, I was irate: To add insult to injury, now I had to pay a parking fee for the “privilege” of waiting in line at the restaurant! In front of me, an elderly woman rummaged slowly through her purse looking for something.
	Rolling my eyes, I thought to myself, Hurry up you sluggish old woman!
x	After what seemed like forever, she finally moved aside. Grumbling, I reached out to insert my credit card. But, the woman stopped me.
	“Can you use this, dear?” she asked, smiling and handing me a free parking coupon.
	“Oh, yes, how kind of you,” I mumbled.
x	I accepted the coupon with a sheepish smile, and watched her walk away briskly.
x	On my way back home, I blushed at my rude and unkind thoughts. As children, we’re taught to “watch our mouths”—meaning we should be careful about what we say to others but maybe we should be taught to “watch our thoughts,” too.

MECHANICS 2: Direct speech

In **reported speech**, a speaker’s words are summarized or paraphrased. There are no special punctuation rules.

My friend said that everything was fine.

In **direct speech**, a speaker’s words are quoted directly. There are several punctuation rules to separate quoted words from the rest of the text:

1. In American English (AmE) punctuation style, spoken words are surrounded by double quotation marks (note the period *before* the final mark):

He said, “That is enough singing.”

In British English (BrE) punctuation style, single quotation marks are used (note the period *after* the final mark):

He said, ‘That is enough singing’.

2. Start a new paragraph each time a new speaker says something:

“We should take the highway,” **Dad** said.

Mom replied, “I agree.”

“That will save us about an hour,” said **Joe**. “We’ll arrive well before 9:00.”

3. Use a comma, period, question mark, or exclamation point at the end of a bit of speech. Place it inside the closing double quotation mark:

“You’re the best,” I said.

I said, “I didn’t expect you to come.”

“Can I come in?” I asked.

“Just a moment!” I shouted.

4. If the bit of speech comes after the information about who is speaking, use a comma to introduce it:

So-jin replied, “No problem.”

5. If the speech is **interrupted** by information about who is speaking, use a comma (or question mark or exclamation point) at the end of the first bit of speech and a period, or another comma, before the second bit:

“You’re right,” she said. “It feels strange to be back in the UK.”

“I’m really surprised,” he said, “I didn’t think our team would win.”

“No!” she cried out. “You can’t leave now!”

6. Internal dialogue indicates what a character is **thinking**. This kind of dialogue does **not** require a new paragraph.

Direct internal dialogue refers to a character expressing a thought in the **first** person point of view (POV). Quotation marks and other punctuation are used as if the character had spoken the words aloud. (Note: You may also use italics without quotation marks for direct internal dialogue.)

“I lied,” Min-seok **thought**, “but Ji-young will forgive me.”

I shuffled inside my pitch-dark bedroom. *That’s odd, I **thought**, why are the drawers open?*

Indirect internal dialogue refers to a character expressing a thought in the **third** person POV and is not set off with either quotation marks or italics. In the examples below, the characters did not “think” these exact words:

Ji-young wondered how Min-seok could lie about such an important thing.

APPLY

A. Edit the dialogue in your individual writing to match the six rules above.

MECHANICS 3: Titles

Your title should do two things: (1) Grab your readers' attention and (2) reflect the theme of your story. An effective way to grab your readers' attention is to make your title either very short or very long.

- ✓ Icebreaker (very short)
- ✓ The Life-Changing Question a Stranger on a Bench Asked Me (very long)

The title should reflect your theme, but it shouldn't be too explicit; otherwise, your story may lose some drama and suspense. Also, avoid using proverbs or full sentences—a period should not make sense at the end of your title.

- ✗ When in Rome, Do as the Romans Do (proverb)
- ✗ There is Humor in Embarrassing Moments. (full sentence + period)
- ✓ Shock of a Lifetime

Note also how the first two “titles” are neither very short nor very long.

Capitalization rules

Capitalize all words in your title except articles, prepositions, and conjunctions. But do capitalize articles, prepositions, and conjunctions if they come at the **beginning** or **end** of the title, or if they contain **five** or more letters.

Also, do **not** surround your title with “quotation marks” or use *italics*.

APPLY

A. Edit the titles.

1. “Judge Others Cautiously”	1. Judge Others Cautiously
2. <i>A Successful Partnership</i>	2.
3. Goodbye, bonus!	3.
4. Attraction beyond the Heavens	4.
5. My first moment of awakening was totally unexpected.	5.

Tip: Visit <https://capitalizemytitle.com/> for help with capitalization.